

The Candidate's Scroll 2

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He was a brilliant candidate, intelligent and able,
Most talented, and furthermore, emotionally stable,
In yesteryear's performance, in this sequel's predecessor
He was awarded tenure as Associate Professor.

A half a decade's come and gone, the man is going strong,
His research shines, his teaching too, and so, before too long,
The dean approaches, wreathed in smiles, and cries with great emotion:
"The time has come to engineer your ultimate promotion!"

The dean prepares a perfect file – astonishingly pretty –
And, wasting not a moment, whisks it off to the committee,
Whose members are most venerable men of weight and girth,
Intent on gauging justly what the candidate is worth.

"He's wonderful", says one, "fleet as a glance, sharp as a lance".
A second echoes: "Furthermore, the man can sing and dance!"
A third cries: "Brilliant!", and the fourth: "Indeed the man's a genius,"
The fifth concedes: "His wisdom does exceed that of his seniors."

[Put on committee chair's hat]

The last to state his point of view is the committee chair –
A gentleman of common sense and quite uncommon flair,
"The man," he says, "is clever and did all that we required,
And yet, his reference letters leave so much to be desired..."

One letter's from an Israeli – just can't trust those guys,
A second's from a chap who's yet to win the Nobel prize,
A third is printed on two sides instead of just the one,
The writer's clearly ignorant – this simply isn't done!

This referee wrote just one page, I guess because he's dying,
A touching letter – just too short – but credit him for trying.
Another one contains a spelling error and a typo –
The referee, one must conclude, is probably a psycho.

The final letter's monumental – wide and thick and long –
Extolling virtues of our man in terms unduly strong,
A bit too much, it must be said, and grossly overstated,
The writer and the candidate are probably related.

The situation, dare I say, is positively prickly,
Our duty weighs upon us, and we mustn't act too quickly,
We all agree we need to think about this for a while,
Let's freeze the process for two years and reassess his file!"

[Remove hat]

Upon receiving word of the committee's new demand,
Our man ran over to the chair, a letter in his hand,
"It's all a big mistake," he cried, "just read this, won't you please?
A full-professorship, you see, awaits me overseas!"

[Put on hat]

The chair replied: "Excuse me while I smile from ear to ear,
I doubt you're going anywhere, I think you're staying here,
Allow me to remind you and to bring to your attention:
If you leave now, you have to forfeit your entire pension.
Your daughter is asthmatic and your mom decalcified –
The health insurance companies will take you for a ride –
And then, that high-school boy of yours, he won't think this is fun,
He simply won't cooperate, just trust me on this one.
To summarize: the situation's hopeless – quite outrageous,
You're definitely staying here. Accept it! Be courageous!!"

[Remove hat]

With heavy heart the candidate starts heading for the door,
But as he strides this lonely path, as many have before,
He hears a sympathetic whisper: "Please don't feel so sorry,
Just park your butt right here, my friend, and listen to this story.

[Put on hat; bring banana tree to center stage]

It's told that many years ago a study was reported,
With such bizarre results that publication was aborted.
A flock of young and handsome apes was rounded up and caged,
Along with one banana tree, conspicuously staged.

Alas, the tree was rigged and so electrically wired,
That if some ape so much as touched the fruit it so desired,
The hapless little fellow and the whole astounded flock
Were brutally assaulted by a sharp electric shock!

[Remove hat, put on ape mask]

The apes developed a routine in two days, maybe three:
Whenever some poor anthropoid approached the lonely tree,
Its friends subdued it in a flash and quickly made the point,
That such behavior was not accepted at this joint!

And once this regular routine had strictly been induced,
A single ape was booted and another introduced.
The newest member wasted not a moment on despair,
In less than half an instant he went flying through the air!
But lo – his mates were swifter still, efficient, blunt and ruthless,
In seven seconds flat they left him crushed and semi-toothless...

A half a week passed by without event, and once again
A single ape was taken out – another one put in.
Quick as a wink, the newest member pounced upon the fruit,
Alas, he fared no better than the previous recruit,
His scorching lust was soon extinguished by the angry mob
That left him sprawled upon the floor like some misshapen blob.

And, odd to note, the leader of the aggravated cast
Was no one but the very ape who joined the party last,
Although completely clueless as to what this was about,
He kicked and thrashed with utmost joy and unrestricted clout.

For many days and nights the apes persisted willy-nilly,
An ape moves out, an ape moves in, an ape gets knocked out silly,
Although the whole initial flock had long been gone by then,
And thus the apes no longer knew the reason for their yen.

Now, should some Doctor Doolittle have asked the apes to state
Some word of explanation of their unbecoming trait,
[Tear off ape mask]
They'd simply answer: 'That's the way we've always done things here,
Now do yourself a favor, ape, and promptly disappear!'

[Put on hat]
A rather haunting story, metaphorical and dark,
And now, if you'll excuse me, I'll conclude with this remark:
Look not for rhyme or reason, pal, nor logic at the core,
It isn't you at all – it's just tradition, nothing more.
We'll meet again in two years time, so long, fare well, adieu,
[Pick the banana from the tree and present to audience]
But wait... Have a banana... it's the least that I can do."