



LOST DREAMS [In the Dark]

A Play in One Act

SETTING: We are inside an elevator. We will not see the doors close or open, but we will hear it happen.

AT RISE: A MAN stands in the elevator reading a newspaper. We do not see his face. SOUNDS OF DOOR OPENING. A WOMAN enters and pushes the button. She checks her watch, and stands silently, looking forward toward the audience.

A BUMP. Lights FLICKER and GO OUT. LIGHTS will FADE to semi darkness during playing time.

WOMAN: Oh No!

MAN: Shit!

WOMAN: Oh God!

MAN: Shit!

WOMAN: (Frantically pushing buttons) It's stuck!

MAN: Yes.

WOMAN: Shit!

MAN: Language.

(a Beat. She grabs the emergency phone)

WOMAN: The phone.

MAN: Try the phone.

WOMAN: It's not working.

MAN: Of course, it's working.

WOMAN: You could try something.

MAN: And get slapped?

WOMAN: Don't be ridiculous!

MAN: I wouldn't get slapped?

WOMAN: (losing it) You know what I mean! Fix it! Push something! Call someone!

MAN: The phone doesn't work.

WOMAN: I know the phone doesn't work. What the hell kind of man are you, anyway?

MAN: I failed macho 101.

WOMAN: I don't believe this. I'm thirty minutes late, already.

MAN: Things happen.

(OVERLAPPING DIALOGUE)

WOMAN: I'm not going to panic. I won't get crazy and...

MAN: Good, I...

WOMAN: God! With a perfect stranger after all. I wouldn't want to shame myself in front of a perfect

MAN: I'm glad you're not going to..

WOMAN: But, I'm late and I haven't eaten all day and I get so..

MAN: Me too.

WOMAN: Cranky when I don't eat and..

MAN: Low blood sugar?

WOMAN: No! Neurotically hungry and I'm not the type to lose it in an elevator with a perfect...

MAN

WOMAN

Stranger..

Asshole....

MAN: What?

WOMAN: God! I think I'm going to ..

MAN: I couldn't take a ...

WOMAN

MAN

Scream aaaaah!

Screamer aaaah!!!

(She clutches him crushing his paper. They look away from each other, protecting space and resume their anonymity.)

WOMAN: Oh, no.

MAN: Shit!

WOMAN: I'm sorry.

MAN: It's okay. I was through with the sports page.

WOMAN: I don't know what got into me.

MAN: Hysteria?

WOMAN: (still clutching his arm) I truly don't act this way.

MAN: You can let go of me now.

WOMAN: Oh.

MAN: If you like.

WOMAN: Oh..(letting go) I'm all right. I'm all right, now. I'm fine.

Don't worry, I'm fine.

MAN: Good.

WOMAN: We just have to wait, right?

MAN: Of course.

WOMAN: Someone will come for us.

MAN: Yes.

WOMAN: When?

MAN: What?

WOMAN: When?!!!

MAN: Soon, I'm sure, soon.

WOMAN: Good.

MAN: Yes.

WOMAN: This is awful.

MAN: We'll be fine.

WOMAN: I feel so.. cut off.

MAN: Yes?

WOMAN: I'm used to being in control, having more control, controlling the ... you know.

MAN: Yes.

WOMAN: Good.

MAN: Consider it a reprieve.

WOMAN: What?

MAN: Being out of control. Allowing other forces to take charge for a while.

WOMAN: Oh no!

MAN: Oh yes.

WOMAN: You're a shrink.

MAN: How did..

WOMAN: Aren't you?

MAN: Well, I..

WOMAN: God! 50,000 upwardly mobile men in Manhattan on any given day, and I wind up in the dark with a shrink.

MAN: Sorry.

WOMAN: How humiliating.

MAN: Yes?

WOMAN: And, stop saying yes!

MAN: Ye..No. Sorry. Would you like a mint?

WOMAN: (blowing into her hand) Is my breath bad?

MAN: I wouldn't know. I..

(She laughs loudly, almost manic)

MAN: Did I say something funny? Or, are you hysterical again?

WOMAN: No!

MAN: Good.

WOMAN: And, I'm not hysterical.

MAN: Of course not.

WOMAN: Just upset.

MAN: Ye...oops.

WOMAN: You just reminded me of someone.

MAN: A comedian?

WOMAN: No. Well, sometimes he was.

MAN: A friend? Teacher?

WOMAN: Neither and both.

MAN: Ah, a lover.

(He starts to lower his paper. She shoves it back into his face.)

WOMAN: No! Don't look at me. I wouldn't want another human being to see me like this. Especially not a shrink.

MAN: Sorry.

WOMAN: He was a shrink.

MAN: Ah. Not a lover.

WOMAN: Only in my mind. What a dreamer I was.

MAN: Ah. A dreamer; maybe a poet?

WOMAN: Just very young at the time. Listen, I swore never to talk about this.

MAN: No. It's fine.

WOMAN: To another human being.

MAN: Just consider me a lamp post.

WOMAN: Talk to a lamp post? That's me alright.

MAN: I mean it'll give us something to concentrate on until they come for us.

WOMAN: I don't talk to people about me. I'm a hairdresser, for Christ's sake.

MAN: Yes?

WOMAN: I mean they talk to me. You know. Get a woman's hair wet, and she'll tell you anything. We hear a lot more shit than shrinks.

MAN: Yes.

WOMAN: Anyway, he wasn't a shrink yet, not back then. And, I hardly think of him anymore. I haven't thought about him for years.

MAN: Really?

WOMAN: Except in my dreams.

MAN: Do you dream of him often?

WOMAN: God no! I dream about getting out of my rat-hole apartment and into a decent rent control. [she laughs] Funny.

MAN: Funny interesting or funny ha ha?

WOMAN: I mean funny... maybe you're right.. About the talking, I mean.

MAN: Aaah.

WOMAN: I do dream about him... often. There he is looking the same and I've changed. I mean, I'm like I am now and I keep waiting for him to notice.

MAN: Sounds like you haven't seen him in a very long time.

WOMAN: Twenty years.

MAN: Regrets?

WOMAN: No.

MAN: Didn't work out?

WOMAN: Didn't work in. He was my brother-in-law.

MAN: I see.

WOMAN: No you don't.

(She almost turns to him. Realizes, turns away.)

It's not as bad as it sounds. I was young, living with my husband's family while he was in 'Nam. Eric was a student.

MAN: You didn't stay with your parents?

WOMAN: They didn't like me much.

MAN: I see.

WOMAN: No, you don't. There's a coincidence for you. I was in love with a psych major and now I'm confessing it to a total stranger in an elevator...

MAN: Who happens to be..

BOTH: A shrink.

MAN: Go figure.

WOMAN: That's a joke. Yuk. Yuk.

MAN: Sorry. Vocational hazard. Guess my conditioning shows.

WOMAN: Me too. Only I'm usually on the other side of the curtain.

MAN: Hmm.

WOMAN: Confessional? Get a woman's..

MAN: Hair wet, right. So. You're a catholic?

WOMAN: Anything but, and everything but... at least once.

MAN: I see.

WOMAN: No you don't. And, it's okay.

MAN: Thank you.

WOMAN: I can't believe how vivid all those memories are.

MAN: It's the dark.

WOMAN: Here, in the dark.

MAN: It's impersonal.

WOMAN: Yeah. Thank you.

MAN: The dark, I mean.

WOMAN: Yes.

(Silence)

MAN: You were very young, then, were you?

WOMAN: Too young to be married, too young to be alone. He knew that, somehow.

MAN: Yes.

WOMAN: What?

MAN: If he were a psych student, he would have known.

WOMAN: Oh. Oh?

MAN: As a psych student.

WOMAN: I see.

MAN: (another beat) That was a joke. Yuk. Yuk.

WOMAN: You have a weird sense of humor.

MAN: Yes.

WOMAN: Do all shrinks have a weird sense of humor?

MAN: (whimsically) Perhaps that's what draws us to the profession.

WOMAN: Your warped sense of..

MAN: What is real.

WOMAN: And all those weird books you read.

MAN: I guess.

WOMAN: Yes.

MAN: Although, they're not all weird.

WOMAN: I know. I used to sneak Eric's text books and read them.

MAN: Really?

WOMAN: One day he caught me with his book on paranoid schizophrenia. After that, he offered me any book I wanted. I think I read his whole course that year.

MAN: Aaah.

WOMAN: Kept one. Still have it.

MAN: Yes?

WOMAN: Abnormal Psychology.

MAN: Yes.

WOMAN: Amazing how he opened up, once I started reading his books.

MAN: Maybe you were his analyst.

WOMAN: I don't mean that. I don't mean that either. I mean, he always looked at me like a kid; then suddenly we were talking about life and the order of things. It was the first time anyone ever talked to me that way.

MAN: That way?

WOMAN: Like an adult.

MAN: Perhaps he felt he could teach you something.

WOMAN: Hey! I was eighteen. I could have taught him a lot. Come to think of it. I'll bet he had himself a laugh. There he was with a big degree and I was telling him how I dreamed of becoming a nuclear scientist and changing the world.

MAN: Very ambitious.

WOMAN: So, I became a hairdresser and changed my name.

MAN: Sounds logical.

WOMAN: Several times. How long does it take for them to come? Has this ever happened to you, before? Is it always so scary? Do you think there's a giant power outage like in the sixties and we're just a couple of little dots in the great brown out who won't even get our names in the paper?

MAN: Would "I don't know" be sufficient?

WOMAN: Aren't you getting anxious?

MAN: I'm only on my way home.

WOMAN: Won't your wife be worried?

MAN: No.

WOMAN: Aah. I forgot. You're a doctor. She's used to it.

MAN: I don't have one. Wife I mean.

WOMAN: Oh. Me either. Husband I mean. Funny. It took me twenty years to stop thinking about Eric. I mean, after.

MAN: After.

WOMAN: My husband didn't come home from 'Nam. It didn't seem right to hang around anymore.

MAN: I suppose not.

WOMAN: Now that I don't think of him anymore, I don't think about marriage either.

MAN: Except when he shows up in your dreams?

WOMAN: Yeah, looking the same.

MAN: Why don't you pretend he's old and nearsighted and losing his hair. He probably is, anyway.

WOMAN: There's an idea.

(pushing at the button)

God! I wish someone would come. This is getting embarrassing. I don't usually bare my soul to strangers.

MAN: In dark places.

WOMAN: I told you, I'm not catholic.

MAN: Sorry.

WOMAN: Would you do me a favor?

MAN: If I can.

WOMAN: Don't look at me. I mean, when it's not dark anymore. I couldn't stand it if another human saw me this way.

MAN: Of course. You can count on me.

WOMAN: Thanks. It's been a long time since I could count on anyone.

MAN: I sensed that.

WOMAN: Would you do me another favor?

MAN: I'll try.

WOMAN: Would you hold my hand a little? I guess I'm a little afraid of the dark.

(Man feels out and takes her hand)

MAN: There.

WOMAN: Thank you.

MAN: Better?

WOMAN: Yes.

(Elevator CLICKS and CREAKS)

MAN: Ah! Progress. You'll be home, soon.

WOMAN: Yeah. Do I owe you anything?

MAN: Beg your pardon?

WOMAN: Fifty dollars an hour or something?

MAN: Hundred an hour, and no; this one's on the house, or elevator so to speak.

(AS LIGHTS FLASH, she looks forward and he pulls the paper in front of his face.)

LIGHTS UP FULL.)

WOMAN: We're moving. What floor?

MAN: Garage, please.

WOMAN: I'm off on one. You know, I'm sort of glad this happened. I feel like we've become friends.

MAN: Being anonymous helps friendship.

WOMAN: Still..... You remember, you asked if I had regrets?

MAN: Yes?

WOMAN: Not becoming a nuclear physicist and not telling Eric I loved him. There. I feel better that one other person knows that.

MAN: Good. I'll put it on my resume.

(SOUNDS OF DOOR OPENING She pushes hold button.)

WOMAN: I didn't ask your name. In case, I need a shrink.

MAN: You won't.

WOMAN: No. Well...

(She steps out of elevator and exits.)

SOUND OF DOORS BEGINNING TO CLOSE

(Man stares front – he is slightly bald with glasses)

MAN: Good bye..... Libby.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

CURTAIN/END OF PLAY