

LUCKY THIRTEEN

A short play

by

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LUCKY THIRTEEN

CHARACTERS

*MAN

ISABEL

*GEORGE

*FRED

MRS. JIMENEZ

**These characters should be played by the same actor*

TIME

Some time in the future.

SETTING

A large office building

LUCKY THIRTEEN

ISABEL and a MAN stand in front of an (imagined) elevator. Sound: Bing! The elevator doors open. They enter. Sound: doors closing.

MAN

(Pressing a button)
Which floor?

ISABEL

Thirteen.

MAN

You're here for an interview.

ISABEL

Yes. Would you press thirteen please?

Sound: The elevator ascends rapidly.
The MAN does nothing.

Excuse me—

MAN

It's their little joke.

ISABEL

What?

MAN

There is no thirteen. Have you ever been in a building with a thirteenth floor?

ISABEL

(Scanning the buttons in vain for 13)
But they were very explicit.

The elevator stops. Sound: Bing! The doors open. The MAN gets out.

MAN

Good luck.

Sound: the elevator door; ISABEL grabs it to stop it from closing.

ISABEL

Wait, this is seventeen, do you know—?

MAN

Don't worry, you'll get there.

Sound: The doors close. Sound: A sudden whirring as the elevator drops like a stone. ISABEL is thrown to the floor by the sudden force. Sound: The elevator stops abruptly. Sound: The doors open. ISABEL walks out of the elevator. Sound: Loud music; it's Stevie Wonder's "Superstition". GEORGE enters. He is jovial, a man happy in his work. He is dressed in black. He carries a stepladder, an open pot of paint, and a clipboard. Rapidly, he sets up the ladder and puts the paint pot on the top of it. He waves his hand commandingly. The music stops.

GEORGE

(Clipboard in hand)

Isabel, welcome, delighted to make your acquaintance, I'm George. Would you crawl under the ladder, please?

ISABEL

Excuse me?

GEORGE

The ladder?

ISABEL

I'm here to see Mrs. Jimenez? About the data entry job?

GEORGE

You've come to the right place.

ISABEL

I have?

GEORGE

Oh, I'm sorry, I forgot. You're from the twenty-first century. We do things a little differently now.

ISABEL

That's very funny.

GEORGE

What is?

ISABEL

This *is* the Department of Veteran Affairs?

GEORGE

Inc.

ISABEL

Inc?

GEORGE

Incorporated. We're a corporation?

ISABEL

But the V.A. is a government agency.

GEORGE

Oh, we don't make those petty distinctions any more. Please crawl. Unless you're superstitious, of course.

ISABEL

(Looking around)

Okay. Where are the cameras?

GEORGE

Isabel—

ISABEL

Is this some kind of—?

GEORGE

I really don't have time for this. It says here that you're a single Mom with a mountain of credit card debt. If you want the job....

He gestures to the ladder. ISABEL hesitates, then reluctantly crawls under the ladder.

GEORGE

Great, great, that's terrific. Now just a few quick questions.

ISABEL

I don't understand, I—

GEORGE

(Reading the form on his clipboard, pen poised)

According to popular superstition, which of the following brings you good luck?

ISABEL

George, I came here—

GEORGE

Cutting your hair during a storm.

ISABEL

This is absurd—

GEORGE

Yes or no?

ISABEL

Yes.

GEORGE

Stepping on cracks in the sidewalk.

ISABEL

No. Look—

GEORGE

Dolphins swimming near a ship.

ISABEL

Yes.

GEORGE

A wild bird in your house.

ISABEL

No, that's a sign of death. And powdered rhino horn can improve your sex life.

GEORGE

Really?

ISABEL

This is ridiculous! I came here for an interview with Mrs. Jimenez. Where can I find her?

GEORGE

Congratulations, you passed with flying colors. That'll be eighty-nine ninety-five. Cash or charge?

ISABEL

What?!

GEORGE

I'm afraid we don't take personal checks.

ISABEL

You want money? For what?

GEORGE

(Holding up an official-looking form)
Your certificate.

ISABEL

I'm interviewing for a job.

GEORGE

And you have successfully completed the first phase of the process.

ISABEL

You expect me to pay just to interview?

GEORGE

Isabel, we're not in this for our health.

ISABEL

But you provide services.

GEORGE

Of course, three times a day. The chapel is right down the hall.

ISABEL

No, no, social services, health care, you help veterans.

GEORGE

Oh, right. I believe they did do something like that in the old days.

ISABEL

You're the V.A.!

ISABEL

Other? How many are there?

GEORGE

It varies.

ISABEL

And I have to pay for each one?

GEORGE

It's an investment. Once you're in, you're in for life. Unless, of course, you want to starve. Out there. Cash or charge?

ISABEL

(Reluctantly handing him a credit card)

Charge.

GEORGE swipes the card above his clipboard. Sound: a cash register ker-ching! He hands the card back.

GEORGE

There you go. Keep an eye out for a four-leaf clover or a black cat.

Sound: "Superstition" again. He exits. The music stops.

ISABEL

(Yelling above the music as he exits)

Wait a minute, WAIT A MINUTE—

(In the silence after the music stops)

Where do I go?

Sound, very loud: The Hallelujah Chorus from Handel's Messiah. GEORGE re-enters. He is dressed the same but with the addition of a long black cape and a cane. He waves the cane with a flourish. The music stops.

GEORGE

Isabel, welcome, delighted to make your acquaintance, I'm Fred.

ISABEL

You said your name was George.

GEORGE
I'm Fred.

ISABEL
Don't play games with me.

GEORGE
I wouldn't dream of it.

ISABEL
You think I'm stupid? This is just one big scam.

GEORGE
Mrs. Jimenez is expecting you.

ISABEL
Oh right, like she actually exists.

Sound, earsplitting: Mariachi music. MRS. JIMENEZ enters, brisk and business-like. She clicks her fingers and the music stops.

MRS. JIMENEZ
Isabel, welcome, delighted to make your acquaintance, I'm Mrs. Jimenez. In case that wasn't obvious. I'll be in my office when you're ready.

ISABEL
I'm ready now.

MRS. JIMENEZ clicks her fingers. Sound: the mariachi music resumes. She exits quickly, and the music stops.

GEORGE
Shall we?

ISABEL
What is it this time?

GEORGE
We call it our spiritual scan.

ISABEL
Scan or scam?

GEORGE
Do you believe in God?

ISABEL
Yes.

GEORGE
Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?

ISABEL
Well—

GEORGE
Yes or no?

ISABEL
No.

GEORGE
No problem. We have a conversion package.

ISABEL
Conversion package?

GEORGE
Six CDs of basic instruction from celebrity theologians, a deluxe gold-embossed Bible—special edition produced exclusively for the Department of Veteran Affairs Inc.—and your certificate.
(He waves it in front of her)

ISABEL
I need to be a certified Christian to get a job here?

GEORGE
Of course, I was forgetting. It's standard in all government corporations.

ISABEL
How much is it?

GEORGE
This *is* your lucky day, it's on special right now. Just two ninety-nine ninety-nine. Including tax.

ISABEL
Three hundred dollars!

Cash or charge?

GEORGE

That's it, I'm out of here.

ISABEL

Isabel, this is the opportunity of a lifetime.

GEORGE

Where's the elevator?

ISABEL

Excuse me?

GEORGE

The elevator, I came on the elevator to the thirteenth floor.

ISABEL

Thirteenth floor? What are you talking about?

GEORGE

Jesus! Where are the stairs?

ISABEL

There's no way out.

GEORGE

Where are the stairs?

ISABEL

Once you're in, you're in.

GEORGE

Show me where I get out of here. SHOW ME!

ISABEL

MRS. JIMENEZ enters. Smiling, she beckons to ISABEL. ISABEL hesitates; she is torn. Slowly, she crosses to MRS. JIMENEZ who shepherds her offstage. Sound: the song "Show Me The Way to Go Home." Cheerfully miming the lyrics, GEORGE takes down the paint pot from the top of the ladder. He folds up the ladder. The music grows louder as the lights fade.

At black, it continues for a few seconds and then ends abruptly with an elevator “ping.”

END OF PLAY

