

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

Sometime 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. As in 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.!

GEORGE

Inc.

ISABEL

So what do you do?

GEORGE

Referrals.

ISABEL

Referrals? Who do you refer people to?

GEORGE

Check our website, it's all there. Cash or charge?

ISABEL

I am not paying you anything!

GEORGE

Suit yourself. But you'd be giving up a lot—good salary, great benefits, stock options. A lifetime of security.

ISABEL

Where is Mrs. Jimenez?

GEORGE waves commandingly. Sound: "Superstition" again. He starts to exit.

ISABEL

WAIT!

GEORGE stops. He waves and the song stops also. ISABEL crosses to him.

If I pay you, do I get to see Mrs. Jimenez?

GEORGE

Eventually.

ISABEL

Eventually?

GEORGE

After your other pre-interview screenings.

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

You mean 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 digital courses 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!

GEORGE

Cash or charge?

ISABEL

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

GEORGE

Isabel, this is the opportunity of a lifetime.

ISABEL

Where's the elevator?

GEORGE

Excuse me?

ISABEL

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

GEORGE

Thirteenth floor? What are you talking about?

ISABEL

Jesus! Where are the stairs?

GEORGE

There's no way out.

ISABEL

Where are the stairs?

GEORGE

Once you're in, you're in.

ISABEL

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

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