

ELEVATOR GAMES

By Sean Abley

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CHARACTERS

STRANGER

BARB

SCOTT

Any of these characters could be male or female. Feel free to change lines as necessary to accommodate casting.

SETTING

The elevator setting can be as simple or complicated as you want it to be.

One very easy solution would be to create the elevator by isolating a square, elevator-sized (or realistically, a bit larger) area on the stage with lights. Have the actors mime pushing the buttons, and use sound for the doors opening and closing, and the "Bing!" of arriving at the floor.

Another solution could be constructing the back wall of an elevator, then adding a small portion of the side walls to define the space. These side walls could literally be less than a foot high, used to define the space without blocking sightlines for the audience. An added effect could be the button panel (inside) and call buttons (outside) floating on a minimal stand in front. This could literally be a stick attached to the floor, again to prevent blocking sightlines.

PROPS

Newspaper

Purse

Lunch bag or lunchbox

Nail file

Sandwich

Wallet

Can of soda

Driver's license

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(LIGHTS UP. ALL three characters enter an elevator.)

STRANGER: *(Fidgeting.)* Twenty-seven, please.

BARB: *(Reading a newspaper that is folded so the name is hidden.)*
Twenty-nine.

(SCOTT pushes the buttons.)

STRANGER: Is that the *Post*?

BARB: No.

(A beat.)

STRANGER: Is it the *New York Times*?

BARB: No.

(A beat.)

STRANGER: Is it --

BARB: No.

(A beat. Another.)

STRANGER: What does it start with?

BARB: What?

STRANGER: What does it start with?

BARB: First, that's bad grammar. Second, with what does what start?

STRANGER: The name of the paper.

BARB: It's the *Weekly World News*, alright?

STRANGER: Oh. *(A beat. To SCOTT:)* What floor?

SCOTT: *(Pointing up to the floor lights at the top of the door.)* Twelve.

STRANGER: No, what floor are you going to?

SCOTT: Excuse me?

STRANGER: Which floor are you going to?

SCOTT: I'd say that's none of your business.

STRANGER: Well, it's either twenty-seven or twenty-nine, because those are the only two buttons lit up.

SCOTT: Good for you, you narrowed it down. Now butt out of my elevator business.

STRANGER: Oh. Well. If you don't want to play, that's fine. Some people just don't have the competitive spirit.

BARB: What?

STRANGER: I mean, I'm just trying to start a pleasant conversation...

SCOTT: In an elevator. People don't talk in elevators.

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STRANGER: Why not?

SCOTT: Because it's weird, and too close, and you can't get away if someone is boring or crazy or whatever.

STRANGER: *(To BARB:)* And you?

BARB: Listen, I'm in no mood, alright? I have a headache and I'm late, so could you keep your games to yourself? That would be amazingly great.

SCOTT: Thank you.

BARB: You're quite welcome.

(A beat.)

STRANGER: *(Looks into his lunch bag.)* I spy with my little eye a sandwich made with...blank. Who can guess?

(BARB and SCOTT give him dirty looks and turn away.)

STRANGER: Seriously. Come on. Guess. *(Smiles and holds out his lunch bag.)*

BARB: Look --

SCOTT: Would you --

(The elevator stops. The lights flicker.)

BARB: *(Quietly.)* Oh, no.

SCOTT: Perfect. *(Presses buttons.)* Hello! Hello! Is someone out there? We seem to be stuck. *(Bangs on the door.)* Hey! Anybody out there? *(Presses emergency button.)* This says "Emergency," but I don't hear anything. Isn't there supposed to be a phone in here?

BARB: The walls...

STRANGER: What an excellent development!

SCOTT: Man, I hope that cable doesn't break.

BARB: The cable...

STRANGER: We'll be fine. See? *(Jumps up and down, causing the elevator to bounce.)*

BARB: The jumping...

SCOTT: Would you stop that? This isn't a bounce house.

BARB: AAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH!!!! *(SHE screams, flings herself against the back wall, looks around wildly, then throws herself to the floor.)*

SCOTT: Whoa! What's wrong?!

BARB: I'm claustrophobic!

SCOTT: Claus...then what are you doing in an elevator?

BARB: This isn't an elevator! It's a trash compactor death trap!

SCOTT: Then what are you doing in a trash compactor death trap?

BARB: I can't walk up twenty-nine floors every day. I'd die!

STRANGER: Oh, right, you're on twenty-nine, and he doesn't know you, so that means he's on twenty-seven. True? False?

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SCOTT: Who says I don't know her?

BARB: It's fine as long as it's moving. But as soon as it stops, the walls get smaller. *(Begins to scrunch herself into a little ball.)* Smaller and smaller until the spaces for the air all seal up. The ones down on the floor are the last to go. Get down here so you can breathe, you idiots! Wait, don't! There's only enough air for one! *(Snuffles along the corners of the elevator, rooting for air.)* Precious air! I love you air! Remember that one time when I breathed you?

STRANGER: Now guess what kind of sandwich.

BARB / SCOTT: *(Panicked / Fed up:)* Shut up!

STRANGER: Okay, okay. You're right. Sorry. *(A beat.)* We'll start with the bread.

BARB: Get me out of here before I lose my mind!

SCOTT: There has got to be a way out. Don't these things have escape hatches on the top?

STRANGER: Why? Why can't we use this time to get to know each other? You're so terrified of human contact and competition. What did your parents do to you?

BARB: Don't go near the top! There's no oxygen up there!

SCOTT: Why don't you just be quiet and help me find a way out of here?

STRANGER: Oh, come on. We all work in the same building. We're practically neighbors. I know, let's all introduce ourselves. Say your name and one interesting fact about you. And then I'll guess where you're from.

BARB: After the walls press us into little cubes, the cable snaps and we plunge to our deaths like eggs off a...very high...place for eggs...

STRANGER: That's a fun fact. But you're supposed to start with your name. So...what's your name?

SCOTT: Look, don't start with her. She's obviously --

STRANGER: Okay, we'll start with you. Name and one interesting fact.

SCOTT: *(Mentally counting to ten.)* Alright. If we tell you our names, will you be quiet?

(STRANGER nods enthusiastically.)

Scott Harrison. *(Gives BARB a little nudge with his foot.)* You. Go.

BARB: Barb Allen.

(THEY both wait a moment, expecting the STRANGER to tell them his name.)

SCOTT: Well? At least be polite and tell us yours.

(STRANGER smiles and mimes zipping his lips.)

What? We told you ours, now tell us yours.

(STRANGER, smiling, points to his zipped lips and shrugs.)

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What are you doing? Tell us your name.

STRANGER: *(Unzips his lips.)* You asked me to be quiet if you told me your names. Rules are rules. So... *(Rezips.)*

SCOTT: Don't be rude. Tell us.

(STRANGER shrugs, smiles and points to his zipped mouth.)

Do it.

(STRANGER mimes trying to open his zipped mouth, then mimes laughing.)

Tell. Us. Your. Name.

STRANGER: *(Unzips just the corner of his lips.)* Guess.

(SCOTT grabs the STRANGER by the shirt. BARB tries to pull him away.)

SCOTT: I'm not going to guess. You're going to tell me.

BARB: Stop it! You'll use up all the oxygen!

SCOTT: What's your stupid name?!

(BARB pulls SCOTT off STRANGER, then drops back to the floor to breath.)

STRANGER: My name...begins with "C."

(SCOTT attacks him again. BARB pulls him off again.)

BARB: Stop! We'll all suffocate!

SCOTT: Tell me!

STRANGER: *(Weakly.)* Why? You wouldn't tell me what floor...

BARB: Please, tell him your floor number.

SCOTT: I will not. Not until I get his name. We told our names, so he owes us. He has to play fair.

STRANGER: But we told our floors first, and you wouldn't. Although I pretty much figured it out. You have to tell that first or the rest doesn't make sense. It's like a story.

SCOTT: This is the stupidest thing...

BARB: Would you just play his stupid game? You're not making this situation any easier by being stubborn.

SCOTT: Stubborn? Principled. Definition: One with principles.

BARB: "-ed" words can't be people. They're states of being.

SCOTT: *(Ignoring her.)* Used in a sentence: There is a principle involved here. He started the game, and now he's changing the rules. I insist he follow his own rules, therefore I'm principled. Or something.

BARB: Rules?! What rules? Grammar has rules, which, P.S., you're not following. He just asked you a simple question.

SCOTT: And who are you to talk? You didn't even guess his sandwich.

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BARB: I'll have you know I was asphyxiating and being crushed into a cube. Besides, that isn't part of the game and you know it.

STRANGER: To be fair, you didn't answer.

BARB: I'm trying to help you here. Don't I get some sort of loyalty along with that? I did stop him from strangling you.

SCOTT: Unfair! Bribing the judge won't help!

BARB: Bribing?! I'm dizzy...I can't breathe...

SCOTT: Don't pull that...

BARB: *(To STRANGER:)* Look what he's doing to me! Air...air...

STRANGER: You really should guess.

BARB: I'm defending you, and you just sit there and watch him kill me...

SCOTT: Don't try to sway the judge...

BARB: I'm not swaying, I'm dying...

STRANGER: I mean, if you don't want to guess...

BARB: I can't breathe...

SCOTT: She just doesn't want to lose...

STRANGER: I'd really like you to guess...

SCOTT: Come on...

STRANGER: You'll feel better...

SCOTT: You know what would be funny? If this elevator was powered by winning, and her losing caused it to stop and crush us all into cubes.

BARB: TURKEY! TURKEY TURKEY TURKEY!! I GUESS TURKEY!!!

(BARB grabs for the sandwich bag, but the STRANGER snatches it away. SHE stands panting as the STRANGER precisely opens the bag, looks inside, then closes it. A beat.)

STRANGER: Wrong.

(BARB launches herself at the STRANGER, shrieking. SCOTT holds her back.)

BARB: YOU'RE A MONSTER!! You're a devil monster person sent here to torment me as I... die to death of... suffocating!! You're going down, monster!! Let go of me!! The monster must be destroyed!!

(SCOTT finally wrestles her to the ground and sits on her. SHE struggles and screams, then finally collapses. SCOTT carefully gets up and sits in a corner.)

SCOTT: You can dish it out, but you can't --

BARB: You SHUT UP!! *(SHE grabs a nail file out of her purse and threatens them with it.)* Don't let me hear one word from you until we get out. Not one. You either.

STRANGER: But...

BARB: I'll cut your heart out so fast you'll see it beating in my hands.

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(A moment of silence.)

STRANGER: I have a dessert, too.

(BARB leaps at him, but SCOTT grabs her and takes the nail file. HE threatens her with it.)

SCOTT: Back off!

BARB: What? I was just going to kill him. We can share his oxygen!

SCOTT: Move over by the game show host over there. Now. I'm sick of your cheating --

BARB: What?

SCOTT: Back off or you lose a limb. And I'm sick of your games. So.

We're gonna sit tight until this box starts moving again. Got it?

Good. *(Silent for a moment.)* It's getting hot in here.

BARB: Yeah, I'm thirsty.

STRANGER: I have a soda.

(SCOTT moves to kill him with the nail file.)

It's a diet Coke! Here! Take it!

(BARB grabs the soda.)

SCOTT: Whoa, wait. Is that all you've got?

STRANGER: Uh huh.

SCOTT: I hate diet. But I'm thirsting to death. This is the worst day on Earth!

BARB: More for me!

SCOTT: Wait, why should you get all of that disgusting soda? I'm thirsty, too, and by the looks of it we may be here a long time.

BARB: I'm a lady. A thirsty lady.

SCOTT: Don't make me say it. Let's split it.

BARB: Alright, but I get first drink.

SCOTT: Uh, false. You'll drink it all and I won't get even a sip. Give it to me!

BARB: Hah! Like you won't do the same. Not on your life, buddy. And if you touch me, I'll spill this everywhere so no one gets any.

SCOTT: Gimme that!

(SCOTT grabs BARB in a headlock. SHE opens the can of soda and pours it over BOTH of them as THEY fight.)

SCOTT: Look what you did!

BARB: Me? You attacked me! I told you what I would do, and you did, and so I did!

STRANGER: She set up the rules, and followed them. Fair is fair.

BARB: Remember, we'd still have a delicious soda if you had just told us what floor you were going to.

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STRANGER: Even though I did pretty much figure it out.

BARB: But you didn't. And now you don't have soda, and you're losing.
You're the ruiner of everything!

SCOTT: Forget it. I'm not playing anymore. I quit.

BARB: Whoa, quitter? Really? Sorry, but you can't quit while you're losing! That's unfair.

SCOTT: Losing? I'm not losing. I haven't answered any questions wrong. I haven't cheated. Besides, if I quit while I'm winning, I lose anyway. What's the point?

BARB: That doesn't make any sense. The point is you're a poor sport.
Poor sport! Poor sport!

SCOTT: I may be a poor sport, but at least I didn't answer wrong.

Turkey was wrong. I'm a poor sport, but you're just dumb.

BARB: Alright, fine. I was wrong. I can admit that because I'm a good sport. So, what's the mystery sandwich? Hmmm? Just whisper it in my ear and it will be our little secret.

STRANGER: I can't tell. You have to guess. You have two more.

(SCOTT laughs.)

BARB: *(To SCOTT:)* I think the problem with you is you don't know what floor you're going to. Is that it? You can't tell because you don't know. You're a temp, or it's your first day, or you're just a moron. But the bottom line is - you don't know. Isn't that right? Hmmm? Isn't it?

SCOTT: I know it.

BARB: Prove it.

SCOTT: I know.

BARB: Prove. It.

SCOTT: I don't have to.

BARB: Because you can't. Prove it, prove it, prove it...

SCOTT: Shut up!

BARB: Proveitproveitproveitproveit...

SCOTT: Thirty-first! The thirty-first floor! There, happy?! Happy now?!

BARB: I WIN! I got him to tell! I win! I'M A WINNER!!

SCOTT: You win nothing!

BARB: I love to win!

(SCOTT snatches the lunch bag from the STRANGER.)

SCOTT: You don't win until you tell me what kind of sandwich this is.

BARB: I don't care! I win the contest of making you tell the number of your floor! Ah, ha ha ha ha!

SCOTT: No, you don't! I lied!

BARB: Hah!

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SCOTT: I did. I lied about the floor. It isn't thirty-one, or twenty-seven, or twenty-nine. When I pushed the button the light malfunctioned, so you don't know what button I pushed. I lied about the floor, my name, everything! And you'll never know what they really are!

(BARB reaches into SCOTT's back pocket and pulls out his wallet. SHE yanks out his driver's license.)

Hey! Give me that back! That's cheating!

BARB: "Scott Harrison." Hah! I'm not cheating, I'm confirming facts.

SCOTT: That proves nothing. Maybe I mugged this "Scott" on the way here. Maybe I'm a murderer who was waiting to see what button you pushed so I could follow you and kill you at your desk!

BARB: I don't care! Kill me! Murder me! It doesn't matter, because I'll DIE A WINNER!!

SCOTT: If you're such a winner, then what's his name?! *(Points to the STRANGER.)*

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