

# The Elevator Stories

*By Neal Barth*

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### **ABOUT THIS COLLECTION**

These two short, comic plays have won high school state festivals and competitions numerous times over the last 20 years. From side-splitting physical gags to clever banter and double-talk, playwright Neal Barth infuses his plays with wit and charm. He has a way of twisting words and situations to their funniest ends, and we laugh because we've been there. Great comedy touches the familiar in our human experience. Neal knows how to reach and recall those moments in our lives that we don't want to remember but always laugh about when we do remember.

### **THIEF BETWEEN THE FLOORS**

4 m, 3 w. What would you do after the elevator stopped, the door locked, and someone said "Hands up!?" A thief robs everyone in the elevator, but they talk him out of keeping their money and valuables. They then use the same loot to bribe the thief into saying they were the heroes! About 15 minutes.

### **THREE IN AN ELEVATOR**

1 m, 2 w. A man and his wife are stuck in an elevator with the man's first wife. The problem is that he never told his second wife that he was married before! About 15 minutes. A winner of the Samuel French Award in the Utah State Drama Festival.

## THE THIEF BETWEEN FLOORS

### CAST OF CHARACTERS

MARVIN: a businessman.

JAMES: a husband.

STELLA: his wife.

AGNES: a fainter.

HILDA: a claustrophobic.

WILLY: a thief.

SECOND THIEF/POLICE VOICE

*(The scene is the outside of an elevator door. The inside of the elevator is visible. TWO PEOPLE approach the elevator; they are husband and wife. Neither speaks. After waiting with their backs to the audience the wife looks witheringly at the husband and he, with a sigh, pushes the button. At this time a MAN approaches and joins them at the elevator and pushes the button also. Still no one speaks. The elevator arrives and they all get on.)*

JAMES: *(As he approaches the interior buttons.)* Going up?

MARVIN: Down.

JAMES: *(Pushing the button.)* I guess we can go down first and then go back up. OK, Stella?

STELLA: Do I have a choice?

JAMES: You could get off and wait.

*(This is met by silence. The elevator stops at another floor, the door opens, and just as it is closing again, AGNES and HILDA arrive. One thrusts a hand into the door to prevent its closing and squeeze into the elevator.)*

AGNES: Whew, just made it.

HILDA: My word, we were almost left at the door. *(Laughs.)*

JAMES: Going down?

HILDA: Oh, no, we are going up.

STELLA: You'll just have to wait, dear.

AGNES: *(With a titter.)* All the dashing for nothing.

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*(The TWO WOMEN huddle and talk quietly. JAMES and STELLA are still not speaking and MARVIN is an interested spectator. TWO YOUNG MEN come to the outside of the elevator, whisper together; one leaves and the other pushes the button.)*

STELLA: *(As the elevator stops.)* Another stop? What floor are you going to?

MARVIN: Three.

STELLA: This is only nine. If we are late, James, I'm going to be angry.

JAMES: We'll be on time. This is only a small detour.

*(The door opens and WILLY comes in.)*

STELLA: I hope you're going down.

JAMES: Stella. ...

*(WILLY keeps looking at his watch.)*

MARVIN: *(Wanting to soothe things for JAMES.)* Almost there ... only two more floors to go.

*(Suddenly the elevator grinds to a halt.)*

JAMES: What the ...?

STELLA: Why did we stop here?

AGNES: Why isn't the door opening?

HILDA: Is there something wrong with the elevator?

MARVIN: I don't know. *(HE tries to open the door - grunting.)* I can't open it. ... Must be stuck.

JAMES: If we're between floors it won't open any way, will it? Isn't there something that holds it closed?

MARVIN: Could be. But, why did we stop here?

HILDA: Oh, dear ... I hope it won't be very long ... *(Starts to whimper.)*

AGNES: There, there, dear, it won't be long, everything will be all right. She suffers from claustrophobia a little bit ...

STELLA: James ... We are going to be late.

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WILLY: (*Mumbles.*) All right, everybody, hands up. This is a stick-up ...

JAMES: What was that?

AGNES: Yes?

WILLY: (*A bit louder.*) Hands up.

STELLA: I still can't hear you.

WILLY: (*Shouting.*) Hands up. This is a stick-up.

(*There is general disbelief.*)

MARVIN: Come on, Mac ... don't goof around ...

JAMES: This is hardly the time for games ...

STELLA: Really ...

WILLY: (*Taking out a gun.*) No joke now ... this is a stick-up...

(*At the sight of the gun THEY all shun him, leaving him in the middle of the car. AGNES faints.*)

HILDA: Oh, dear ... I ... Agnes! (*SHE bends down to her.*) Are you all right? She has fainted ... She's frightened of guns.

STELLA: James, do something ...

WILLY: James, don't do anything ...

JAMES: I won't ... I won't ...

(*MARVIN is behind WILLY and starts to grab him when Willy wheels on him.*)

WILLY: Don't try it ... (*MARVIN backs away.*) This won't do. I can't see you all at one time. Everybody get to the front of the car ... (*THEY all move to the front.*) That's better. No, wait ... better get you away from the door ... all of you go to the back of the car. (*THEY all move to the back.*) Better, better ... now ...

(*WILLY is very nervous.*)

MARVIN: Can we put our hands down?

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WILLY: No, no ... keep them up there ...  
AGNES: *(Coming to.)* Ohhh ... what happened ...?  
HILDA: Agnes, this man is trying to rob us ...  
AGNES: Rob us ... Ohhh. *(Faints again.)*  
MARVIN: What shall we do with her ...

*(MARVIN and JAMES struggle to get AGNES to her feet with everyone getting in their way and still trying to keep clear of WILLY.)*

WILLY: *(Pulling the stool over.)* Prop her up on this ...  
JAMES: She's certainly no light feather ...  
HILDA: Agnes, you poor dear ... *(Patting AGNES' face.)*  
Agnes, can you hear me?  
MARVIN: That won't do any good, lady ...

*(MARVIN moves over and slaps her face.)*

AGNES: Oh ... who did that?  
HILDA: What a cruel thing to do! Agnes, are you all right?  
AGNES: Who hit me?  
HILDA: That man ...  
WILLY: All right now ... give me your money.  
JAMES: Can we put our hands down now?  
WILLY: Of course ... put 'em down ... *(Takes bag out of his pocket.)* Put your money in the bag.  
MARVIN: No.  
WILLY: What?  
MARVIN: No. I won't do it.  
WILLY: But ... you have to, I have the gun ...  
JAMES: I won't either.  
WILLY: But, you're supposed to ... He said that you would ...  
JAMES: No.  
WILLY: Please ...  
STELLA: Maybe you'd better, James ...  
WILLY: Yes, I think so... *(Hands the bag to STELLA.)* Here, fill it up with their stuff. Put all your things in that bag.  
MARVIN: Ha.  
STELLA: James, put your wallet in here.

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