

The Elevator and the President

a short play

by

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SAMPLE ONLY

CHARACTERS

MAN

A young man. 20's.

THE PRESIDENT

The President of the USA. Texan
accent. 50's.

(There is no set. A MAN enters, presses an imaginary elevator button, and waits. The elevator bell sounds. He enters the elevator, faces front and presses a button. The doors close and he watches the indicator above the door.)

The PRESIDENT enters, presses the elevator button and faces front.)

THE PRESIDENT
(Singing loudly and happily)

America, America...

(The elevator bell sounds again.)

Hey, that's my elevator!

(The doors open, he enters the elevator beside the man, presses a button and the elevator moves.)

THE PRESIDENT
Hya. Howya doin'?

MAN
Good. Busy day?

THE PRESIDENT
Keeps me off the streets. I'm tellin ya I'm dangerous when they let me onto the streets!

(Pointing his finger, pretending to shoot randomly)

Pow, pow. Hey, it's only my finger.

(He blows on the tip of his finger and pretends to re-holster it)

Ya like John Wayne?

MAN
Sure.

THE PRESIDENT
I like John Wayne. Ya know, John Wayne once said,

(Imitating John Wayne)

"Fella once told me to shoot first and ask questions later. Well, I was gonna ask him why, but I had to shoot him!" Love John Wayne. Man after my own heart. D'ya like guns?

MAN
No.

THE PRESIDENT

Me neither. Don't like em at all. But I gotta carry one all the time. Just for my job.

(Pats his hip pocket.)

MAN

What's your job?

(The elevator bell sounds.)

THE PRESIDENT

Hey, here's my floor. You have a good day, y'hear.

MAN

You too.

THE PRESIDENT

Never had a bad one.

(They jerk up and down together as the elevator jams.)

What was that?

MAN

I have a horrible feeling the elevator's just jammed.

THE PRESIDENT

Sheaght! Goddam elevators! I hate elevators. If there's one thing I hate it's elevators!

MAN

(tentatively reaching for the buttons)

Might try just...

THE PRESIDENT

Here, let me at it...

(banging the buttons violently)

C'mon you mother fucker!

(screaming to anyone)

Get me the fuck outa here! I gotta speech to make in five minutes!

MAN

Hey, calm down a bit, alright.

THE PRESIDENT

I cain't calm down. I got a speech to make.

MAN

Speech? What kind of speech?

THE PRESIDENT

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A speech to the nation, of course! It's a Republican party rally. Twenty thousand people! You a Republican?

MAN

So, what is it you do?

THE PRESIDENT

Don't tell me you're a Democrat? I hate Democrats! If there's one thing I hate more than elevators it's Democrats!

MAN

Look... there's a phone in that panel there...

THE PRESIDENT

(grabbing the handset)

Hey you this is the President of the goddam United fucking States of America get me outa here!

(pause)

John Wayne!? Really? Why, we was just talkin' about... Hey wait a minute... don't bullshit me boy, John Wayne's dead! Listen son, I got a goddam speech to the nation to make in four minutes and you gotta get me out... Where!!? In the stuck elevator for chrissake... What elevator? Whaddya mean what elevator? The one in this great big building... I don't know what building... the great big one, you idiot!

(slams down the handset)

MAN

Nicely handled.

(picks up the handset)

Hello? I'm so sorry... Yes... yes, he did, didn't he...

(looking at the President)

I'm not sure... he says he is... Quite tall, actually... yes... but... I wonder if you could find a way to get us out of this elevator...

(The PRESIDENT reaches for the handset)

Sorry, what was your name? Justin? Justin, the um... President would like to speak to you again... Oh... I see...

(to the President)

Mister President... Justin says he'd prefer not to speak directly with you... he'd rather deal through me, if that's okay with you.

THE PRESIDENT

Fine! Just sort it out!

MAN

(to Justin)

You can fix it? That's great. How long will it take?
Okay. Thanks, Justin. You'll call us if anything happens?
Thanks. Bye.

(hangs up)

He says they can fix the elevator.

THE PRESIDENT

Good! Good! When?

MAN

In about ten minutes.

THE PRESIDENT

Ten minutes? Ah, shit! I'm gonna miss my address to the
nation! I gotta get outa here right now!

(screaming to anyone)

Get me outa here an' that's an order! I'm the President
and I demand an explanation!

MAN

So you're really the President?

THE PRESIDENT

Of course I am!

MAN

Of the United States?

THE PRESIDENT

Look at me! Don't ya recognise me?

(MAN seems unsure.)

You can go and watch me on national TV in a few minutes
if we can just get outa this goddam elevator!

(jumping up and down violently)

C'mon you mother fucker!

MAN

Okay, okay... Mister President, I think we should just
calm down a bit, and sit here and wait. I mean, does it
really matter if you're ten minutes late? The president
of the United States? What are they going to do? Go home
without you?

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Of course not! They wouldn't dare! Would they?

MAN

I don't know. Maybe you could pass a presidential decree or something... make it illegal to leave a rally if the president is late.

THE PRESIDENT

No, no, no! You don't understand! This is a democracy we're living in! I can't just yell out a new law at the top of my lungs from a stuck elevator! I gotta follow due process! I gotta sign forms! You should see the forms I gotta sign! Overriding congress... overriding the constitution takes time! I gotta get outa here right now, before they get up and leave!

(now very upset)

I'm gonna die here! They're all gonna go home and I'm not gonna make my speech! Daddy's gonna be so disappointed in me!

(starting to cry)

MAN

(in a motherly tone)

Oh, Mister President... all we have to do is wait a while and we'll be out of here and addressing the nation, just like that. You'll see.

THE PRESIDENT

(composing himself)

Yeah, I guess you're right. I'm sorry... I'm not acting myself. This is not my usual environment.

Ya know, I hate that word, "environment", don't you? Environment. Just makes me feel uncomfortable. Don't know why.

Maybe I feel uncomfortable 'cos I'm a president in a stuck elevator! It's not a natural place for a president to be!

MAN

It'll make a great news story. "President stuck in elevator with man..."

THE PRESIDENT

Whay do you know about news stories, boy? Are you a reporter? I hope you're not a reporter 'cos, you know what, I hate reporters. If there's one thing I hate more than Democrats, it's reporters. Are you a reporter!?

MAN

No, I'm not a reporter.

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THE PRESIDENT

Good.

(pause)

Hey, maybe you're one of my bodyguards! Are you my bodyguard?

MAN

No.

THE PRESIDENT

Darn.

MAN

Where are your bodyguards?

THE PRESIDENT

Damned if I know. Do you wanna be my bodyguard?

MAN

Don't know if I'm qualified.

THE PRESIDENT

Nothin' to it. Are you a terrorist?

MAN

No.

THE PRESIDENT

Fine. You got the job!

(They shake hands)

You know, you and me we make a pretty good team. Sort of like a coalition of the willing.

(The phone rings. THE PRESIDENT dives for the handset.)

Justin! You get us the fuck outa here! If I get my hands on you I'm gonna bust your...

(MAN takes the handset from him)

MAN

Hi Justin. Any news?

THE PRESIDENT

Tell him it's of the utmost importance!

MAN

You can fix it when...?

THE PRESIDENT

The future of my political career... no, the future of the free world is at stake!

MAN