

Stalled Kiss

by
T. James Belich

Copyright © 2009 by T. James Belich
James@Playwrighting.org
<http://www.playwrighting.org/>

Stalled Kiss

by T. James Belich

CHARACTERS

DEBORAH, *a busy professional (late 20s/early 30s)*

JOE, *her former boyfriend (late 20s/early 30s)*

BOB, *an innocent bystander (50s/60s)*

Total Roles: 3 (1 female, 2 male)

SET REQUIREMENTS

None, unless it is desired to depict the elevator more literally.

(BOB stands in an "elevator" reading the newspaper. He is in his 50s/60s and is nicely dressed. The walls and doors of the elevator may simply be mimed. DEBORAH enters and crosses to the elevator door. She is late 20s/early 30s and very professionally dressed. Facing upstage she mimes pressing the elevator button, waits for the doors to open, and enters the elevator. She stands to one side of BOB and turns to face downstage. JOE runs in. He is also in his late 20s/early 30s, but is dressed more casually and is not as well put together as DEBORAH.)

JOE

Hold the door please!

(DEBORAH does so.)

DEBORAH

Oh. It's you.

JOE

I, uh, can take the next one.

DEBORAH

No, no, it's fine, just get in.

JOE

Thanks.

(JOE enters and stands on the other side of BOB. They are all silent as the elevator doors close and it starts "moving.")

So... how are you, Deborah?

DEBORAH

Fine. You?

JOE

Fine, thanks.

(Pause)

Work OK?

DEBORAH

It's fine.

JOE

Good.

(Pause. They all act as if the elevator has suddenly stopped. Pause. DEBORAH tries pressing a button. Nothing happens and so she tries again.)

The elevator's stopped.

DEBORAH

I can see that, Joe.

(DEBORAH tries the button yet again.)

JOE

What's wrong with it?

DEBORAH

I don't know.

JOE

Maybe you hit the wrong button. Did you try –

DEBORAH

I know how to use an elevator, Joe!

(BOB looks up from his paper.)

JOE

Sorry.

(Pause and BOB returns to his paper.)

I'm sure it'll just start up in a second... Any second now...

(Pause and DEBORAH mimes picking up the emergency phone.)

DEBORAH

Hello? Hello, yes, I'm calling from the elevator. It's not moving.

(Slight pause as she listens.)

Yes I tried the button! The door won't open.

(Slight pause)

I don't know.

(To JOE)

What floor are we on?

JOE

Seventh.

DEBORAH

(Into the phone)

We're on the seventh floor.

(Slight pause)

There are three of us.

(Slight pause)

Yes, we're fine. How soon can you get us out of here?

(Slight pause)

And why can't you say?

(Slight pause and then DEBORAH cuts off the other speaker.)

Look, just hurry, all right?

(Slight pause)

What else do you think we're going to do?

(She hangs up the phone.)

Stay put, he says. As if we have a choice. We're stuck in an elevator for crying out loud!

JOE

I've never been stuck in an elevator before.

DEBORAH

I'm glad to see you've achieved one of your many goals.

JOE

It makes for a good story.

DEBORAH

If you say so.

JOE

Don't you think it makes for a good story?

DEBORAH

Do we have to talk?

JOE

What else is there to do?

(DEBORAH turns away. Pause and JOE starts to read BOB's newspaper over his shoulder.)

BOB

Do you mind?

JOE

Sorry.

(Pause)

So, Deborah, what's new?

DEBORAH

What do you want, Joe?

JOE

I just thought –

DEBORAH

We broke up over a month ago and what did I say then?

JOE

That you never wanted to see me again.

DEBORAH

Exactly. So?

JOE

We work in the same building. We were bound to run into each other eventually.

DEBORAH

How convenient.

JOE

What, you think I planned this? You're crazy.

(To BOB)

She's crazy.

DEBORAH

Don't be an idiot. Like you would plan anything in order to be seen in public with me.

JOE

Not come on, Deborah, that's not –

DEBORAH

What was it, Joe? Was I that terrible to be with? Was I?

JOE

No!

DEBORAH

Then what was it? You wouldn't even hold my hand in public.

JOE

Look, I'm just not always comfortable with –

DEBORAH

Are you that afraid of intimacy? Huh?

JOE

I think you're right. Not talking is a great idea.

DEBORAH

Typical.

(Pause)

JOE

(To BOB)

I'm Joe, by the way.

BOB

Bob.

(They shake hands.)

Nice to meet you, Bob. That's Deborah. JOE

Right. BOB

We used to date. JOE

Yeah, I got that. BOB

You know it's funny, when we first met – JOE

Can I get back to my paper now? BOB

Sure, sorry. JOE

Always the charmer. DEBORAH

Are we talking or not? JOE

What do you think? DEBORAH
(JOE turns to face front. Pause)

So, you married? JOE
(To BOB)

No. BOB

Me neither. JOE

I figured. BOB

What's that supposed to mean? JOE

BOB

Nothing! You said you only just broke up with her, so unless you found someone new really fast...

JOE

Well maybe I did.

(DEBORAH hmpfs in disbelief.)

How do you know?

DEBORAH

Oh I know.

JOE

What, and you did?

DEBORAH

Would it be so hard to believe?

JOE

No. I mean, who wouldn't jump at the chance? What do you think, Bob?

BOB

I'm staying out of this.

DEBORAH

I'm on to bigger and better things, Joe. I'm moving up in the world.

JOE

Not right now you're not.

DEBORAH

You see, this is why I broke up with you.

JOE

What, I have a great sense of humor?

DEBORAH

(Sarcastically)

Yes, Joe, that's exactly it. You were just too much fun.

JOE

You weren't exactly a picnic yourself.

DEBORAH

Oh really? And which of my many character flaws did you object to? Was it my irritating tendency to put others before myself? Or perhaps my insufferable tidiness? Or maybe it was simply my basic respect for other human beings?

JOE

How about the constant belittling? You could never just take me as I am.

DEBORAH

Imagine that.

JOE

It was enough when we met.

DEBORAH

Because I thought you'd experience some personal growth, Joe. I didn't think you'd devolve.

JOE

(To BOB)

You see what I had to put up with? Nothing but insults for six months.

BOB

That long?

JOE

Thank you.

(To DEBORAH)

You see?

BOB

No, I mean the two of you dated for that long?

DEBORAH

I can hardly believe it myself.

BOB

What finally ended it?

DEBORAH

Well...

JOE

I'm right here!

DEBORAH

(Ignoring him)

He was amusing at first, believe it or not, but whenever we went out it was like he was embarrassed to be seen with me.

JOE

That's not true...

DEBORAH

(Continuing)

It was all I could do to get him to sit next to me, let alone hold my hand. And a kiss... Ha!

JOE

Bob, buddy, you can't believe a word of this.

DEBORAH

I'll prove it. Joe, take my hand.

JOE

What?

DEBORAH

Pretend we're back together.

JOE

What's that supposed to –

DEBORAH

Just take it.

JOE

Look, you made it very clear what would happen if I so much as winked at you again...

DEBORAH

(To BOB)

You see? He can't do it. And do you know why?

BOB

Why?

DEBORAH

Because deep down he's chicken, afraid to commit.

BOB

I think I can see that.

JOE

Maybe you should go back to your paper, Bob.

BOB

Now listen to me, young man, a woman needs to be shown some affection...

JOE

I don't believe this.

BOB

Take it from me, I know.

JOE

I'm sorry, how long did you say you were married?

BOB

A woman needs to know that she's appreciated.

DEBORAH

Yes, Bob, thank you!

BOB

Now I know you've got it in you, so why don't you just take her hand and patch things up.

DEBORAH

Now wait a minute, that's not what I was saying...

BOB

I think the two of you could be very good for each other, if you just make the effort to work things out.

JOE

(Enjoying this turn of events)

You know Bob, you're right, and I'll try to do better.

BOB

Relationships take commitment, on both sides.

DEBORAH

Now look here, Bob –

BOB

And you, miss, I'm sure the young man has his faults, but deep down he seems like a nice fellow.

DEBORAH

Excuse me?

BOB

I'm sure if you just gave him another chance...

JOE

What do you say, Deborah? Kiss and make up?

DEBORAH

This is not what I... I am not going to...

(JOE and BOB look hopeful. Suddenly DEBORAH looks smug.)

All right Joe, if that's what you want.

JOE

Really?

DEBORAH

Kiss me.

JOE

What?

DEBORAH

Right here, right now, and dinner tonight is on me. I'll give you another shot.

JOE

Um, well...

DEBORAH

(To BOB)

You see? What did I tell you.

(They all act as if the elevator starts up again.)

About time. So nice seeing you, Joe.

(She faces downstage and ignores the others.)

BOB

(Quietly, to JOE)

Now or never, son.

JOE

But –

BOB

Do you want to be right?

(He returns to his paper. The elevator doors open and DEBORAH starts to exit.)

JOE

Deborah.

(She stops and turns. JOE gives her a big kiss.)

You can pick me up at seven. Have a good day at work.

(JOE leaves the elevator and exits. DEBORAH turns to BOB who just shrugs. DEBORAH also leaves the elevator and exits, still stunned. Slight pause as the elevator continues.)

BOB

Kids.

(Chuckling to himself, BOB continues to read his paper as the lights fade to black.)