

Mind the Magic Forest

A meeting of her mind.

— by Rick Butts —



Being shunned is **worse than being lonely**.

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By

Rick Butts

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Rights: Rick Butts
Email: rick@rbws.ca

www.rickbutts.ca
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CAST OF CHARACTERS

THE VOICE IN HER HEAD / DI, a personification of the voice in DEB's head.

DEB, a woman with an active imagination who decides to go camping. Early thirties.

THE GUY DEB FANCIES / TONY SOPRANO, a personification of DEB's imaginary man.

SCENE

A campground in a magic forest. On the right, two stumps where campers can sit. A few feet away on the left, a small tent.

TIME

Now.

SYNOPSIS

In her thirties and lonely, Deb wakes up in a magic forest realizing that she is searching for something more. Di is the voice in her head. Tony is a man she fantasizes about who plays dog frisbee in his underwear. On command and without a dog. Together they help Di understand she should get a cat. Or three.

Notes about sound cues indicated in this live stage script

This script indicates sound cues (sound effects such as wolf howls) which are recommended when the play is presented as an audio-only performance. They are not required in the live stage version and may be omitted at the discretion of the director. However, to the extent that they are manageable they are helpful in the stage version.

SETTING: A campground with two stumps and a small tent. Night has fallen. Forest sounds. A wolf howls.

AT RISE: Lights come up. DEB is lying on the ground unconscious, obscured behind the stumps. THE VOICE IN HER HEAD sits on the ground downstage centre. THE GUY DEB FANCIES is in the tent.

(Nearby, sounds of the forest, howling wolves.)

THE VOICE IN HER HEAD

(Gets up. Shouts.)

Deb! Where are you?

THE GUY DEB FANCIES

(From inside the tent.)

Deb! I'm pretty sure she's not in the tent.

THE VOICE IN HER HEAD

(To THE GUY DEB FANCIES in the tent.)

You? I thought she was done with you months ago. Why are you in her tent?

THE GUY DEB FANCIES

She told me to stay. I think.

THE VOICE IN HER HEAD

(Calls out to the forest.)

Deb! Are you out there?

THE GUY DEB FANCIES

(Runs over to look at THE VOICE IN HER HEAD.)

Deb? Wherefore art thou Deb.

THE VOICE IN HER HEAD

You're not helping.

THE GUY DEB FANCIES

You don't look like Deb.

THE VOICE IN HER HEAD

That's because I'm not Deb. I'm the voice in her head. If you're here, then this is bad.

THE GUY DEB FANCIES

I'm Tony—

THE VOICE IN HER HEAD

Don't start. I know who you are. We need to find Deb.

THE GUY DEB FANCIES

—Soprano. I'm the guy Deb fancies.

THE VOICE IN HER HEAD

Another of her ridiculous fantasies. We need to find her.

(Shouts out to the forest.)

Deb! Where are you?

THE GUY DEB FANCIES

I'm Tony Soprano.

THE VOICE IN HER HEAD

You're *not*, actually. Oh never mind. Listen Tony, I need you to focus. We must find Deb.

(Shouts out to the forest.)

Deb! Where are you?

(They wait. Forest sounds, howling.)

THE VOICE IN HER HEAD (CONT'D)

She's never run off like this before. She wouldn't leave me without saying something.

THE GUY DEB FANCIES

(Pleasantly.)

So you're the voice in her head? Wow. I'm Tony—

THE VOICE IN HER HEAD

Yeah, I know. The guy she imagines is out there for her.

THE GUY DEB FANCIES

I was just going to say it's nice to finally meet you.

THE VOICE IN HER HEAD

No, you idiot. *Not* nice. If we're standing here freezing our butts off in the middle of a forest jibber-jabbering, then something is wrong. I'm the voice that's supposed to be *inside* her head.

THE GUY DEB FANCIES

(Pretends to understand.)

Does that mean *you're* out of *her* mind?

THE VOICE IN HER HEAD

(Thinks about it.)

If I'm here and she's not . . . yeah, I guess I'm out of her mind.

THE GUY DEB FANCIES

Of course, Miss . . . ?

THE VOICE IN HER HEAD

Di. Just Di.

THE GUY DEB FANCIES

(Hurt.)

Ough, that's mean.

THE VOICE IN HER HEAD

No. *Di*. It's my name. Short for Diana. You can call me Di.

THE GUY DEB FANCIES

(Suddenly cheerful.)

Okay Di. I'm Tony, the guy Deb fancies.

DI

(Formerly THE VOICE IN HER HEAD.)

Indeed you are.

TONY

(Formerly THE GUY DEB FANCIES.)

Are you worried about my Deb?

DI

My Deb? Did not know that. Yeah, I'm worried.

TONY

If you're concerned that we're going to elope together, there is no cause for alarm. I'm honourable and would never disrespect her parents by not getting their consent.

DI

You're a figment of her imagination. No, not worried about you two. I'm worried because she's a single woman in her thirties who's never spent a day at the beach. Now gone camping by herself for a week in a magic forest. And she's missing.

TONY

Hmm. The odds of her surviving are less than optimal.

DI

Is that supposed to make me feel better? But you're right that the threats to her survival are real. And if something happens to her, not sure what that means for you and me.

TONY

Then we must save her. Do you have an article of her clothing I could sniff? Underwear?

DI

Ick! Don't be disgusting.

TONY

I am devoted to her. I couldn't live without her.

DI

You're a fantasy who normally lives in her head. If she dies, I'm pretty sure you're toast.

TONY

I like toast!

DI

She has zero experience surviving a *regular* forest. Don't get me started on the hazards that lurk in *magic* forests. The last one she got lost in was the Forest of Arden.

TONY

Forest of Arden?

DI

As You Like It.

(Pause. Tony doesn't understand.)

Never mind. Shakespeare joke. She might be in danger.

TONY

If she's in danger, I am her champion. I will save her.

DI

(Sigh.)

I can't tell you how comforting it is to hear that.

(Forest sounds, howling wolves.)

TONY

I would stand between her and a fire-breathing dragon. He will not dart past me.

DI

Okay, probably won't need to worry about that. You know they fly, right? He'd go *whoosh* right over your head. Like most of this conversation.

TONY

If she were pursued by a bear, I would doff my shirt and overtake the grizzly fellow, wrestle him to the ground and hold him until he yields. I would pin him with a bear hug.

DI

Doffing? Yeah, I can see that. Half bare-naked bear wrestling. But again, probably not something we're looking at right now.

TONY

The mighty lion is no match for me! If he were to sniff even a single whiff of my Deb—or her clothing—I would grab him by the tail, swing him thrice over my head and launch him a furry hammer throw out over the trees yonder.

DI

There's that sniffing her clothes again. Icky, Tony. And over the trees yonder? Great! Maybe keep that lion tossing bit as Plan B. What we need is her whistle. I told her to get one but she's not listening to me these days. It might be in her purse.

TONY

Her purse thingy? In the tent. Wait here.

(TONY goes to the tent. Comes back with the purse.)

The purse of Milady's Lady!

DI

(Finds the whistle.)

Got it. Stand back. If Deb's nearby, she'll hear this.

(Blows the whistle.)

(Loud whistle.)

(TONY takes his shirt off. In his undershirt. Runs around, jumps.)

DI

(Yelling.)

Whoa there, Tony! What're you doing? Why is your shirt off? Nice lords a-leaping, by the way.

TONY

(Panting.)

I'm quite accomplished at dog frisbee. I don't even require a dog. Deb has trained me. A single toot of her whistle and I run about sans shirt, leaping into the air until she whistles for me to stop.

(TONY runs behind a stump, kicks DEB.)

DEB

(Sitting up.)

Ow! You stepped on me!

TONY

(Shouts.)

Found her!

(DI runs over to DEB, helps her up, TONY runs into the tent.)

DI

(Overjoyed. Hugging DEB.)

Deb! Let me help you. Are you okay?

DEB

You look familiar.

DI

I've been worried sick about you. Where have you been?

DEB

I know that voice. Diana?

DI

Di. I'm going with Di now. Can I hug you again?

DEB

I guess. This is weird. Am I dead?

TONY

(Shouts from inside the tent.)

If you were, I wouldn't be getting ready for bed in our tent. Very much alive over here for whenever you want to join me, Debbie-pooh!

DEB

Is that Tony? He's here too?

DI

In the flesh. You're consenting adults. Whatever you're up to with him is none of my business. I'm just glad you're okay.

DEB

You came with me camping?

DI

I didn't want you to be alone. Sorry, for crashing your plans with Tony.

DEB

No! Nothing with Tony. Why didn't you say anything driving up? I felt so lonely in the car.

DI

I didn't want to argue with you anymore. About this camping trip being stupid. You probably remember me getting a little heated.

DEB

You were an itty-bit teeny annoyed. Yes, I remember.

(In full faux outrage.)

Are you DEB? Or are you DUMB DEB? OR DUFFUS DEB? Or simply DERANGED DEB?

DI

That sounds like something I would have thought. I was probably just trying to get into your head. Sorry.

DEB

Wait. There's more.

(More faux outrage.)

DEB DEB DEB. You've NEVER EVER BEEN CAMPING. Let alone camping in A MAGIC FOREST. For a week. By yourself. Where no one EVER COMES BACK UNCHANGED.

(Pause. Quietly.)

Yeah, I remember. Now here's the thing, Di. I sort of agreed with you at the time. Especially about coming back changed by the experience. But I just couldn't back down.

DI

Really?

DEB

Did it occur to you that part of me wanted to be changed?

DI

Which part?

DEB

Not the part that's you. I really missed you.

(Pause.)

Three hours in the car without you criticizing my driving and switching my music . . . wow, I thought you were gone.

DI

I'm sorry for nagging you about always being on your phone.

DEB

(Laughs.)

But it was me and my phone that did this. I wanted more bars, walking with my head down. I didn't see the tree. Or it swung a branch out to whack me. You know, magic forest thing. BANG! Right between the eyes and I'm out!

DI

I know. So was I. *Out* I mean. Knocked right out of your head and woke up over there.

DEB

So now you're . . . *out*? My *Diana*. Sorry, *Di*. I respect that you're transitioning.

DI

Out? Yeah, out over by the tent.

DEB

That tree knocked the crap out of me.

DI

Hey, that's mean!

DEB

Sorry, figure of speech. You know what I meant. *You. You* got knocked out of me.

DI

I wasn't thinking about leaving you. It just came into my head. *Your* head actually. And then it happened.

DEB

So how does this work? You've been the voice in my head for as long as we can remember. And now you're out.

DI

I'm not sure. This is new to me too. You've always been my person.

DEB

We can't let this end just because you're . . . out. We have so much history, so many memories.

DI

We do. Honestly, I feel I'm nothing without you. Hey, I got an idea that just popped into your head!

DEB and DI TOGETHER

A cat!

DI

Remember when we talked about getting a cat?

DEB

I said no because it would be lonely when I was at work during the day.

DI

I said get *two* cats then so they'd keep themselves company. Not much more work.

DEB

I said no because I worried they would bond. And when I came home, the two of them would ignore me and just hang out together.

DI

And then you made a joke of it.

DEB and DI TOGETHER

LONELY, BUT NEVER SHUNNED!

DEB

Being *shunned* is worse than being *lonely* for a woman like me. As soon as I get back, I'm going to get *three* cats.

DI

Three?

DEB

Because they won't be lonely when I'm at work. And when I'm home even if two are zooming around playing a two-cat game, the other one can sit with me and we can watch!

(Laughs.)

Maybe this whole magic forest thing could have been avoided if I'd gotten a cat in the first place?

DI

No! Don't say that. Then I'd never have met you in person.

DEB

That's lovely of you to say that.

DI

And I wouldn't have met Tony Soprano. In the flesh.

DEB

Yeah. That's kind of embarrassing. But it's hard to keep secrets from you.

DI

(Holds up the whistle.)

You want to play with him some more? I've got your whistle.

DEB

Sure. You do it.

(They sit on stumps. DI blows the whistle. TONY bounds out of the tent in undershirt & boxers. Runs, jumps after an imaginary frisbee.)

DI

In all the years we've been together, I never knew this about you. His boxers are cute.

DEB

You know, those dark secrets we don't admit even to ourselves? The ones we hide from the voice in our head? Tony playing dog frisbee in his underwear. That's mine.

DI

Hey, no judgements. I'm glad you finally got to share. And I can certainly see the appeal. He's got nice looking . . . hands. Can you make him leap into the air a bit?

DEB

(To DI, watching TONY.)

Yeah, he does have a nice set of . . . hands.

(TONY stops. Runs off into the bush.)

DI

Hey, where's he going?

DEB

He probably saw a squirrel. Or another woman. Even with all his training, when he spots one lurking nearby, he's off like a shot.

(TONY barking. A wolf howls. TONY barks back.)

DI

Should I whistle him back?

DEB

No. He'll ignore us if he we can't see him. He'll be back. Or he won't.

DI

I think I should go find him.

DEB

I'm beginning to feel better now. Di, you helped a lot. Thanks for being here for me.

(TONY barking in the distance. DI gives the whistle to DEB, silently walks off stage.)

DEB

Di?

(Silence. Looks at whistle.)

Di, you'll need the whistle.

(She blows it gently. A soft toot-toot.)

Di?

DI

(From a long way away.)

Found him. Might stay a while. You go back now. Get cats.

(DEB smiles and nods. Touches the side of her head as light fades.)

(END OF PLAY)