

VOICES

IN A FOREST INSIDE A MIND.

— by Rick Butts —



When a mind falls in the forest **and no one's around to hear it.**

Voices

They're out of their minds.

by

Rick Butts

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

THE VOICE IN HER HEAD / DI, a woman from DEB's mind. 30s.

THE GUY DEB FANCIES / TONY SOPRANO, a man, DEB's fantasy. 30s.

DEB, a woman, TONY's fantasy. 30s.

RESCUER, a woman, any age.

SCENE

A campground in a magic forest.

TIME

Now.

SYNOPSIS

In her thirties and lonely, Deb wakes up in a magic forest longing for something more out of life. Di is the voice in her head. Tony is Deb's fantasy who plays dog frisbee in his underwear to amuse her. On her command and without a dog. Together Di and Tony help Deb understand she should get cats. But then Tony discovers that it's not all as it seems in a forest inside a mind as Deb and the helicopter arrives to rescue him.

SETTING: At right, two stumps or logs sturdy enough to sit on. At left, a small tent, the remnants of a fire. If the set cannot accommodate a tent, it is offstage left with TONY accessing it as needed.) In the tent, a small telescope and a purse containing a whistle.

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

THE VOICE IN HER HEAD

(Gets up. Shouts.)

Deb! Where are you?

THE GUY DEB FANCIES

(From inside the tent or off-stage left.)

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

THE VOICE IN HER HEAD

(To THE GUY DEB FANCIES in the tent or off-stage left.)

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

(Rushes out of tent / enters left with the telescope to scan the forest.)

Deb? Wherefore art thou Deb.

THE VOICE IN HER HEAD

You're not helping.

THE GUY DEB FANCIES

(Looks through the telescope at THE VOICE IN HER HEAD.)

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. Never mind. Listen Tony, I need you to focus. We must find Deb.

(Shouts out to the forest.)

Deb! Where are you?

THE GUY DEB FANCIES

(Yells into the telescope, imitating THE VOICE IN HER HEAD.)

Deb! Where are you?

THE VOICE IN HER HEAD

Hey! It's a telescope, not a microphone!

THE GUY DEB FANCIES

I knew that. It was worth a try.

THE VOICE IN HER HEAD

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

THE GUY DEB FANCIES

(Sits down on a stump. Taps a stump beside him for her.)

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 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

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

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

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

No, not worried about you two. I'm worried that she's a single woman in her thirties who's never spent even a whole 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 exist in her head. If she dies, I'm pretty sure you're toast.

TONY

I LOVE toast!

(Tony races back into the tent / off-stage, comes back with a loaf of bread, grins, gestures at the fire.)

DI

No Tony. No toast. Find Deb. 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

You have no idea how much comfort that gives me.

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

(He races to the stumps, jumps up on one, flexes like a wrestler.)
If she were pursued by a bear, I would doff my shirt and overtake the grizzly fellow, wrestle him in this very spot and hold him until he yields. Pinned piteously in a bear hug!

DI

Shirt doffing? Yeah, I can see that. Half bare-naked tree stump dancing. But again, probably not something we're needing right now.

TONY

The mighty jungle lion is no match for me! If he were to sniff even a 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 smelling 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

Which is in the tent. Wait here.

(TONY runs to the tent / off-stage. Comes back with the purse.)

The purse of Milady's Lady!

DI

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

(Looking through the purse. Finds the whistle. Blows loudly.)

(TONY takes off shirt. In undershirt, runs, jumps.)

DI

Whoa there, Tony! What're you doing? 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 toot of her whistle and I run about sans shirt, leaping until she whistles for me to stop.

(TONY runs by stumps upstage, bangs into DEB.)

DEB

(Sitting up.)

Ow! You stepped on me!

TONY

(Shouts.)

Found her!

(DI runs to DEB, TONY goes into tent / off-stage.)

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? You have a bump on your head.

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? I feel light-headed.

TONY

(Shouts from inside the tent / off-stage.)

We're not dead yet! But I'm dizzy with excitement now that you're back. Getting ready for bed in our tent for whenever you want to join me, Debbie-poo!

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. You didn't say anything driving up. I felt so lonely in the car.

DI

I didn't want to argue with you. About this camping trip being stupid. I got a little heated.

DEB

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

(In full faux outrage.)

Are you DEB? Or **DUMB** DEB? OR **DOOFUS** DEB? Or maybe **DE-RANGED** DEB?

DI

(Apologetically.)

Sounds like something I would have thought. I was trying to get into your head. Sorry.

DEB

Wait. There's more.

(More faux outrage.)

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.

(Beat.)

Yeah, I remember. Now here's the thing, Di. I agreed with you. Especially about coming back changed by the experience. But I 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.

DEB

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

DI

Out? Yeah, out over there.

(Points to where she woke up.)

I didn't know you were here all along.

DEB

That tree knocked the crap out of me.

DI

Hey, not nice!

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 popped into my head. *Your* head actually.

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 . . . not in my head? Are you real now?

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 . . . transitioning? We have history, memories.

DI

We do. I feel I'm nothing without you. I got an idea that came to you!

DEB and DI TOGETHER

A cat!

DI

Remember 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 bother.

DEB

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

DI

You made a joke of it.

DEB and DI TOGETHER

BEING SHUNNED BY A CAT IS WORSE THAN BEING LONELY!

DEB

But I was wrong. If you don't want to be lonely, you have to put yourself out there. And maybe you get shunned. Even by a cat. I'm ready to take the risk.

DI

I think you should go for it.

DEB

As soon as I get back, I'm getting *three* cats.

DI

Three?

DEB

So they won't be lonely when I'm at work. When I'm home 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 wouldn't have happened if I'd just gotten a cat.

DI

No! Don't say that. If not for this forest, 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 embarrassing. 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 the stumps upstage. DI blows whistle. TONY bounds out of tent / on-stage in undershirt and boxers. Panting, he runs, jumps for an imaginary frisbee. DEB and DI watch as they talk.)

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. I can 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 suddenly. Looks offstage. Runs off.)

DI

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 thinks we can't see him. He'll be back. Or he won't.

DI

I should go find him.

DEB

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

(TONY barking in the distance. DI gives DEB the whistle, silently walks offstage after TONY.)

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, touches her head and winces. Sits for a beat. Gets up and goes into the woods after DI.)

(TONY enters, looks around for the women, more distracted than earlier. He taps his head gingerly.)

TONY

(Shouts.)

Deb! Di!

(A rustling in the bush off left.)

RESCUER (OFF)

Hey, are you Tony?

(A rescue worker enters left in protective gear.)

TONY

I'm Tony Soprano.

RESCUER

I'm glad to see you Tony. We've been looking for you for seven days.

TONY

I'm Tony Soprano.

RESCUER

My name's Deb. I'm a search and rescue officer.

(Removes her helmet. Reaches into her backpack, takes out bandages.)

You've got quite a bump on your head. Will you let me take a look at it?

TONY

(Suspiciously.)

You don't look like Deb.

RESCUER

That's my name, Tony. I'm Deb. I'm here to help you.

TONY

(Points right.)

I can see Deb. Over there.

(DEB silently appears, stands watching.)

RESCUER

(Into headset.)

Dispatch. This is search four, Sergeant Real. We've got him. Alive. In the Magic Forest. He looks like he came through the briar patch. We'll need EVAC. Four Real out.

TONY

You're for real? Miss . . . ?

RESCUER

Sergeant. You can call me Deb.

TONY

(Shouting. Points at DEB. She waves back.)

Deb's over there.

RESCUER

(Looks around, doesn't see DEB, approaches TONY slowly.)

I'm here Tony. I'm running the team that's looking for you. You're all alone.

TONY

(Agitated. Points at DEB.)

Not alone! Deb's here! You can ask her yourself!

RESCUER

There's no one else Tony. It's just you and me. My team's coming.

DEB

(Gently to TONY, unheard by RESCUER.)

You're safe now Tony. You can go with her.

TONY

(To DEB.)

Can we still get cats? I'd like to have cats.

DEB

Soon as we get back, for sure. We'll get three cats.

RESCUER

I like cats too. Sure, as soon as you get back, there's no reason why you can't get cats.

TONY

Deb says we're going to get cats.

RESCUER

I did. It's totally up to you. Now let me look at the bump on your head, Tony.

DEB

Let her see your head, Tony. Then we get cats.

(A whistle in the distance. TONY runs around as RESCUER restrains him. DEB exits.)

RESCUER

Whoa there Tony, I need you to stay still now. That's my team telling us they're close.

(Guiding Tony to the ground. Inspecting his head.)

You've got a little bump on your head. I'm going to clean around it and put a bandage on it, okay?

TONY

(Looking after DEB.)

Deb?

RESCUER

Yeah, I'm right here Tony. Help is coming.

(DI appears, looks for DEB, ignores TONY and RESCUER.)

DI

(Shouts.)

Deb! Where are you?

(TONY reacts. RESCUER doesn't hear her.)

TONY

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

RESCUER

I'm right here Tony. Stay still until the helicopter comes, okay?

DI

(Notices TONY.)

Tony? I thought she was done with you months ago.

(Sounds of helicopter. Flashing lights. Lights out.)

(END OF PLAY)