

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 / NO-MARTY SHORT, a man, DEB's fantasy. 30s.

DEB, a woman, 30s.

RESCUER / SERGEANT DEB, a woman, any age.

SCENE

A campground in a magic forest *on the bonnie banks o' Loch Fairy 'n Newmarkit*.

TIME

Now.

SYNOPSIS

In her thirties and lonely, Deb wakes up in a magic forest realizing that she's searching for something more. Di is the voice in her head. No-Marty is a man she fantasizes about who plays dog frisbee in his underwear. On command and without a dog. Together Di and No-Marty help Deb decide to get cats so she'll be less lonely. But then No-Marty, the fantasy man, becomes confused as he's rescued and the helicopter comes to take him away.

SETTING: On right, two stumps (rehearsal blocks). On left, a small tent. (If the set cannot accommodate a tent, it's offstage left with NO-MARTY going to it as needed.) In the tent, a small telescope and a purse with 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 No-Marty Short. I'm the guy Deb fancies.

THE VOICE IN HER HEAD

I know who you are. 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 the guy Deb fancies.

THE VOICE IN HER HEAD

I know what she thinks of you. You're no Marty Short.

THE GUY DEB FANCIES

I am. No-Marty Short.

(Reaches out to shake hands. She ignores him.)

THE VOICE IN HER HEAD

You are. Now never mind that. Listen No-Marty, 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 No-Marty—

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 on the edge of a magic forest jibber-jabbering, then something is wrong. I'm the voice that's supposed to be *inside* her head.

(Thinks about it.)

If I'm here and she's not . . . I must be going out of HER mind..

THE GUY DEB FANCIES

Of course, Miss . . . ?

THE VOICE IN HER HEAD

Di. Just Di.

(Sounds like "die".)

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 No-Marty Short.

DI

(Formerly THE VOICE IN HER HEAD.)

Indeed you are.

NO-MARTY

(Formerly THE GUY DEB FANCIES.)

Are you worried about my Deb?

DI

My Deb? Did not know that. (beat) Worried? A single woman in her thirties who's never spent a whole day at the beach goes camping by herself for a week in a magic forest—

(in a Scottish brogue)

on the bonnie banks o' Loch Fairy 'n Newmarkit!

MUSIC: Scottish fiddle / pipes jig melody up & out.
(NO-MARTY starts to tap his foot. DI is confused, looks around for the source of the music.)

NO-MARTY

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

DI

Ick! Don't be disgusting.

NO-MARTY

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

DI

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

NO-MARTY

I LOVE toast!

(NO-MARTY races back into the tent / off-stage, comes back with a loaf of bread.)

DI

No-Marty, no toast. Find Deb. She has zero experience surviving a *regular* forest. Don't get me started on the hazards that lurk in a *magic* forest—

(in a Scottish brogue)

on the bonnie banks o' Loch Fairy 'n Newmarkit!

MUSIC: Scottish fiddle / pipes jig melody up & out.

(NO-MARTY starts dancing. DI looks around for the source of the music.)

NO-MARTY

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

DI

You know they fly, right? He'd go *whoosh* right over your head. Like most of this conversation. 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.

NO-MARTY

Which is in the tent. Wait here.

(NO-MARTY runs to 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.)

MUSIC: Scottish fiddle / pipes jig melody up & out.

(NO-MARTY takes off shirt. In undershirt, runs, jumps. DI looks around for the source of the music.)

DI

Whoa there, No-Marty! What're you doing? Nice lords a-leaping, by the way.

NO-MARTY

(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.

(NO-MARTY runs by stumps upstage, bangs into DEB.)

DEB

(Sitting up.)

Ow! You stepped on me!

NO-MARTY

(Shouts.)

Found her!

(DI runs to DEB, NO-MARTY runs 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.

NO-MARTY

(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-pooh!

DEB

Is that No-Marty? 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 No-Marty.

DEB

No! Nothing with No-Marty. 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 did.

DI

I was worried that if you went camping in a magic forest by yourself, you'd be changed by it. No one ever comes back from a magic forest unchanged.

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. Walking with my head down. The tree cut me off and whacked me in the face. I must have passed out.

DI

I got knocked out too. Right out of your head.

DEB

So now you're . . . *out*? My *Diana*. Sorry, *Di*. What are your pronouns?

DI

I mean *out*. As in out over there.

(Points to where she woke up.)

I didn't want to leave you. It just came into my head. *Your* head actually. Then I was out.

DEB

How does this work? You've been the voice in my head for as long as we can remember.

DI

Not sure. This is new to me. You've always been there for me. Always.

DEB

We have history, memories.

DI

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 got an idea that just 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 each other company. Not much more work.

DEB

I said no. I worried they would bond. When I come home, they'd probably ignore me and hang out with each other.

DEB and DI TOGETHER

WE'D BE SHUNNED BY OUR CATS!

DEB

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

DI

I think you should go for it. Take the risk of getting shunned by a cat!

DEB

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

DI

Three?

DEB

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

DI

To think I've finally met you in person. And No-Marty. In the flesh. Can we play with him some more? I've got your whistle.

DEB

Sure. You do it.

(They sit on the stumps upstage. DI blows whistle)

MUSIC: Scottish fiddle / pipes jig melody up & out.
(NO-MARTY bounds out of tent / on-stage. In undershirt. Panting, he runs, jumps for an imaginary frisbee. DEB and DI watch as they talk. They ignore the music.)

DI

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

DEB

You know, those dark secrets we don't admit even to ourselves? The ones we hide from the voice in our head? No-Marty 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 jump a bit?

(NO-MARTY stops. Looks off-stage. Runs off.)

DI (CONT'D)

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.

(NO-MARTY barking. A wolf howls. NO-MARTY 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. I think I've been changed by this. Must be the magic forest. Di, you helped a lot. Thanks for being here for me.

(NO-MARTY barking in the distance. DI gives DEB the whistle, silently walks offstage after NO-MARTY.)

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.)

(NO-MARTY enters, looks around for the women, more distracted than earlier. He taps his head gingerly.)

NO-MARTY

(Shouts.)

Deb! Di!

(A rustling in the bush off left.)

RESCUER (OFF)

Hey, who's there?

(A rescue worker enters left in protective gear.)

NO-MARTY

I'm No-Marty Short.

RESCUER

(Gently. In a caring voice.)

Okay, sir. That's fine, Mr. Short. We've been looking for you for a week.

NO-MARTY

I'm No-Marty Short.

RESCUER

I'm Sergeant Deb, *Loch Fairy 'n Newmarkit*, Search and Rescue.

NO-MARTY

(Suspiciously.)

You don't look like Deb.

RESCUER

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

Marty, you've got quite a bump on your head. Let me take a look at it.

NO-MARTY

I'm No-Marty Short.

RESCUER

(Gently.)

Oh, sorry. No-Marty.

NO-MARTY

(Suspiciously.)

It's okay. Why are you saying you're Deb?

RESCUER

No-Marty, I'm Sergeant Deb, *Loch Fairy 'n Newmarkit*, Search and Rescue. I'm here to help you. Why don't we get you safe and then I'll show you my ID.

NO-MARTY

(Points right.)

I can see Deb. Over there.

(DEB silently appears, stands watching.)

RESCUER

(Into headset.)

Dispatch. Unit 905. We've located the fantasy.

(Listens.)

I will confirm.

(Stares at NO-MARTY.)

Confirm. He's No-Marty Short. In the *magic* forest—

(in a Scottish brogue)

on the bonnie banks o' Loch Fairy 'n Newmarkit!

MUSIC: Scottish fiddle / pipes jig melody up & out.

(NO-MARTY appears agitated with the music.

RESCUER ignores it, focuses on NO-MARTY.)

NO-MARTY

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

Deb's over there.

RESCUER

(Looks around, doesn't see DEB, approaches NO-MARTY slowly.)

I'm here No-Marty. I'm with the team that's looking for you. We're alone for now.

NO-MARTY

(Agitated. Points at DEB.)

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

RESCUER

There's no one else, No-Marty. It's just you and me. Help is coming.

DEB

(Gently to NO-MARTY, unheard by RESCUER.)

No-Marty, it's okay. You can go with her.

NO-MARTY

(To DEB.)

Can we still get cats? I want to have cats.

DEB

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

RESCUER

I like cats. Sure, as soon as you get back, you can get cats. Do you like cats?

NO-MARTY

Deb says we're going to get cats!

RESCUER

I did. If that's what you'd like, No-Marty. Now let me look at the bump on your head.

DEB

Let her see your head, No-Marty. Then we'll get cats.

(A whistle in the distance. NO-MARTY tries to run as RESCUER restrains him. DEB exits.)

RESCUER

Whoa there No-Marty, I need you to stay still now. That's my team telling us they're close.

(Guiding NO-MARTY to the ground. Inspecting his head.)

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

NO-MARTY

(To RESCUER.)

I'm No-Marty.

(To DEB.)

Deb?

RESCUER

Okay, No-Marty, I'm right here. Help is coming.

(DI appears, looks for DEB, ignores NO-MARTY and RESCUER.)

DI

(Shouts.)

Deb! Where are you?

(NO-MARTY reacts. RESCUER doesn't hear her.)

NO-MARTY

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

RESCUER

I'm right here, No-Marty. Stay still until the helicopter comes, okay?

DI

(Notices NO-MARTY.)

No-Marty? I thought she was done with you months ago.

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

(END OF PLAY)