

THE ELEVATOR
a play in one scene (2000)
by Mark Noonan

for Steve

Scene:

Inside an excessively large mirrored elevator in a skyscraper. Bigger than any normal elevator, it is moving up, filled with a post-lunch crowd of young Internet salesmen, businessmen, tech support, tech evangelists, MIS consultants, etc. They are all late twenties with a Northern California look: dress pants, shiny shoes, nice button down shirts with cuff links, some have on sport jackets with no ties, others just shirts. Neatly gelled hair and stylish glasses sported by some. A few carry laptops in over-the-shoulder bags.

They are all decent looking young men, some better than others, but many look like dressed up geeks trying to be cool—they’re not cool, but their clothes are. A couple have out Palm Pilots and some check email on their cell phones or talk into their cell phones.

Stuck in the back is a man of the same age dressed in a corduroy sportcoat, a white button down shirt, neck open, no undershirt, tan khakis, and brown scuffed up workboots. He has medium-length sandy hair. Tall and built, face a bit sunken with stubble. Leathery face but still very handsome. Dirty fingernails. He wears dark sunglasses.

The elevator stops every few floors and men get out. This happens five or six times. They exit to the right and left, off into the darkness.

Doctor Tom (man at back) watches each man exit until only he and another well dressed man are left.

Tod is five feet eight inches tall—a computer whiz kid, he’s a great manager and programmer. He wears dark dress pants, shiny black shoes, a royal blue shirt, glossy yellow tie, gelled hair, small wire glasses. He has short dark brown hair, a tanned body, clean hands, a pugish face—small eyes, dark eyebrows, slightly pudgy cheeks as if his body were just starting to get used to eating a lot, thin mouth, perfect teeth, clean-shaven and aftershave.

He has a laptop in a leather bag slung over his shoulder, a cell phone in his pant pocket and he is messing around with his Palm Pilot with the little pencil in right hand, Palm Pilot in left.

They are the only two left on the elevator. Tod is oblivious to Dr. Tom’s presence and keeps playing with his Palm Pilot. Dr. Tom stays in the opposite corner occasionally looking at Tod. Dr. Tom looks up at the numbers and the elevator comes to a stop between floors. Tod ignores the stop.

Pause.

DR. T

Looks like we’re stuck.

Tod doesn't answer. Pause.

DR. T

I said it looks like we're stuck.

Pause.

DR. T

Hey!

TOD

(startled) What? Huh??

DR. T

We're stuck—

TOD

(looking around) Oh, yes. It appears so.

Tod goes back to the Palm Pilot. Pause.

Dr. Tom lets out a put off, yet-he-finds-him-funny, "Huh"

Dr. Tom sits down in the corner and lights up a cigarette.

TOD

(looks with eyes, then with head lowered) You can't smoke in here.

Dr. Tom doesn't respond. Pause.

TOD

It's a fire hazard, could you please not smoke in here?

Dr. Tom looks at his reflection in the mirrored wall next to him, acting like he doesn't hear Tod. Pause.

TOD

I'm not kidding. Look, if the sprinklers go off we'll get soaked and my laptop...

DR T

What?

TOD

Whaddaya mean what?

DR T

What is...

TOD

What is what?

DR T

What is your...

TOD

Problem.

DR. T

Right. What is your problem? (*takes off sunglasses and makes eye contact for first time*)

TOD

I don't have a problem, it's just the cigarette...

DR T

So you do have a problem. (*puts sunglasses in breast pocket*)

TOD

No. Well, yes. If you, could just put it out...please...I'd...

DR. T

Oh, sure. No problem.

Dr. Tom rubs it out on the floor.

TOD

Thank you. (*working to regain composure*)

Pause.

DR T

You can get a signal in here?

TOD

(beaming) Oh, yes! This new model is the most powerful Pilot in the world...

DR T

Amazing!

TOD

Yes, it really is.

Pause.

DR T

What's your name?

TOD

What's that?

DR T

I said what's your name?

TOD

My name?

Dr Tom gives a look like “this information won’t kill you”

My name's Tod. I'm sorry. It's Tod.

Dr. Tom leaps up and goes over to Tod.

DR T

Tod, it's Tom. Dr. Tom. Nice to meet you.

They shake hands.

TOD

Oh, you're a doctor—

DR T

Yeah, does that surprise you?

TOD

No, I didn't mean that—

DR T

Yes you did.

TOD

No, really, I didn't know...

DR T

It's okay. Ya got me. I'm not really a doctor, I'm a ballerina (*he pirouettes around, Tod laughs*)

TOD

What kind of—

DR. T

But what about you, whadda you do?

TOD

Uh, well, I'm into computers.

DR T

Really? You don't say?

TOD

No. It's true. I am.

DR T

What exactly do you do?

TOD

Uh, well, I'm the MIS consultant for this company (*motioning to the building*)

DR T

This company, this building? This whole building?

TOD

Yes.

DR T

Wow! That's great.

TOD

It's okay.

DR T

Shit! Wow! You must do all right?

TOD

I get by. (*laughs at his own bad joke*)

Pause.

DR T

Say, do you think they know we're in here?

TOD

I sure hope so. I'm sure they're working on it—What time is it?...I hope they get it going by two.

DR T

Why's that?

TOD

I've got a meeting.

DR T

Ahhh. (*pause*) Does this sort of thing happen a lot?

TOD

Lately, yeah. They've been having trouble. They're new elevators.

DR T

Oh, (*pause*) maybe we should use the phone, dial somebody up? Whaddaya think?

TOD

We could, but the phone doesn't work. I tried it last week when I got stuck in here...

Dr Tom laughs and laughs.

TOD

What's so funny?

DR T

You got stuck in here last week?

TOD

Well, yes. I mean... I guess it was last week. Yes...

Dr Tom keeps laughing. Tod joins in. They laugh and laugh, like old friends. Dr Tom finally collapses and sits in the middle of the elevator, leaning against the back. Tod checks the ground for dirt and then sits down in the stage left corner. He puts his laptop in front of him with the palm pilot, in leather case, on top.

They sit together catching their breaths. They look at each other, then laugh some more.

Dr Tom pulls out a flask from his inside coat pocket, unscrews the top, and takes a long drink. He offers it to Tod.

DR T

Tod...

TOD

What? Oh, no. Thank you.

Dr Tod continues to hold out the flask and look at Tod.

TOD

No, really, I can't. Thank you.

DR T

Okay.

Dr. Tom takes a swig then puts it back away.

TOD

So, what do you do, Doctor Tom?

DR T

You can just call me Tom.

Dr Tom pulls out a little bottle of Sweet Breath and puts two drops on his tongue.

TOD

Okay. Well, Tom...what's that?

DR T

Have you ever tried this stuff?

TOD

Uhhhhhhh, I don't know. What is it?

DR T

It's called Sweet Breath.

TOD

Uh, no. I don't think so. What is it for?

DR T

It sweetens your breath.

TOD

Oh yeah.

DR T

Yeah. You gotta try this stuff, it's great. Your mouth'll smell like roses. No joke.

TOD

Oh, no. I don't think so. That's okay, really...

DR T

Here. Look at it. (*hands it to Tod*) Smell it. Go on. Smell it.

Tod unscrews the top and smells it.

TOD

I don't smell anything.

DR T

That's right. You don't. It's the reaction it makes with your mouth. It's just ridiculous.

TOD

Hmmmm...

DR T

Try it. All you need are a couple drops...There's plenty in there, don't worry. And then, Presto! Roses. (*pause*) Here. Smell my breath. (*he breaths into Tod's face*) Rosy, right?

TOD

It's not bad.

DR T

Can't even smell the whiskey, right?

TOD

Actually, no.

DR T

You see. That's right. Because, and here's the secret Tod, aside from being able to tell a great story, what's the second most important thing women look for? (*pause*) Sweet breath.

Tod opens his mouth and squeezes out a couple drops. He tastes around inside his mouth, swallowing, etc.

TOD

I don't taste anything.

DR T

Give it a minute.

Tod keeps tasting his mouth; they sit in silence. After time...

TOD

Oh, yes...

DR T

See...

TOD

Yes, yes, mmmm, yes.

DR T

Roses, right?

TOD

Yeah, roses, yes. It's like a giant—Wow! Roses, whooo, it tastes great.

DR T

I told you.

TOD

This stuff is wonderful.

DR T

Give it a smell.

Dr Tom cups his hand under his mouth, breaths out and smells it. Tod follows suit.

DR T

Smells good, doesn't it?

TOD

Oh, yes. It's a great smell. I'll have to buy some of this stuff. Sweet Breath, right?

DR T

Sweet fuckin' Breath...

TOD

hun...

Pause. Calm.

DR T

Do you think they're ever gonna get this thing going? (*rising up, looking around*)

TOD

Oh, yes. I'm sure they're working on it.

DR T

It's fucking hot as hell in here.

Dr. Tom takes off his sportcoat and tosses it in the corner.

TOD

It is.

DR T

Ughhhh...(*pulls his shirt off and throws it*) Aren't you hot?

TOD

Yeah.

DR T

Do you mind?

TOD

No. Not at all.

DR T

Really?

TOD

No.

DR T

You sure?

TOD

Oh, yes.

DR T

Okay. Good.

Dr Tom puts his back against the cool side mirrored wall.

DR T

Oh, God, yeah! Oh, that feels good. Oh! You should try this...

TOD

Yeah, it's just not...

DR T

Oh, yeah. Ohhhh (*heavy breathing, he relaxes his body*)

Pause. Dr Tom keeps pushing his body against the mirror: "oh, oh, oh..."

TOD

Does it really help?

DR T

Oh, yeah. It feels great.

TOD

hmmmm...

Tod quietly takes off his tie. Dr Tom keeps pressing his body against the wall, but looks at Tod whose head is down as he slowly unbuttons his shirt.

DR T

Tod, I'm not gay...just so you know...

TOD

No, that wasn't...

DR T

Then what was...

TOD

Nothing. I'm gonna try it, it...

DR T

It feels fuckin' great.

TOD

Really?

DR T

Yeah.

Tod takes off his shirt and places it in the corner on top off his laptop. He's still in his undershirt, which has big pit stains. He starts rubbing his back against the side wall only half into it. It feels cool but not cool enough. Dr Tom notices.

DR T

You've gotta go bare to get the full effect.

TOD

Oh, no, I can feel it. It feels good.

DR T

Okay...

Tod keeps trying it but knows it would feel better without the shirt. Dr Tom has turned his back to Tod and has his chest and right cheek pressed against the mirror facing out. It feels great. Tod surreptitiously turns his back to Dr Tom and takes off his undershirt. Tod then presses his chest against the wall and involuntarily lets out a “Ohhhhh...” It does feel good. Dr Tom watches all this out of the corner of his left eye. Right cheek still pressed against glass, he says

DR T

Feels good, doesn't it?

TOD

Oh, yes...

They stay like this for a short while—two men on opposite sides of an elevator, chests pinned to the mirrored walls.

Then, Dr Tom turns around, takes off his boots (not wearing socks) and khakis so he is left in just boxers. He then turns back to the mirror, moves a little upstage and sticks to the wall like a spider, one leg up, the other supporting, and then switching so each leg can feel the cool.

Tod looks and notices Dr Tom. He turns around and quietly takes off his shoes and socks. He turns back, moves slightly upstage, presses his foot against the mirror with his body and pulls up his pants leg to expose his calf to the cool.

DR T

Aren't you wearing underwear?

TOD

Uh—no—I—why? Yes I am. Why?

DR T

Boxers or briefs?

TOD

What's that? Briefs. Why?

DR T

That's why.

TOD

That's why what?

DR T

That's why.

TOD

No, that's not why. These are just really nice pants and I don't wanna mess them up.

DR T

Oh.

TOD

What? You don't believe me?

DR T

No, I believe you. I just really don't care.

Long Pause.

Tod turns around (facing wall) and quietly takes off his pants. He folds them along the creases and places them atop his computer bag. Tod turns back to wall, chest against wall in his briefs. Dr Tom turns around, back against wall, and looks at Tod. Time passes. Tod feels the eyes on him and turns around. Dr Tom stretches out against the wall, enjoying the cool mirror, his eyes closed. Tod looks at Dr Tom's built body.

Phone rings.

TOD

Oh, (*rummaging through his clothes to find it*)

He finds the phone after the third ring.

TOD

Hello?...Oh hi, Jim. How are you? Good...Good...Yeah, I'm good. Good...Okay...I don't see why not...Uh hun...Sure, when did it...Okay...All right...can I call you in about a half hour...Great...Yeah...that'd be perfect...Okay...That's fine...talk to you later...Bye.

Meanwhile, unbeknownst to Tod, who turns away from Dr Tom when on the phone for privacy, Dr Tom has been smoking a cigarette.

DR T

Why don't you turn that thing off?

TOD

Because what, what, you're smoking again?

DR T

You got it.

TOD

I, uh, it might set off the sprinklers.

DR T

It might, but it won't.

TOD

What if it does, then what?

DR T

Then we get wet. I don't know. Then we take a shower, we're practically naked anyway...

TOD

That's not the point.

DR T

AHHH! FUUUUK! Look! I like smoking. It brings me joy. Just like your little palm computer. (*pause*) Here's the deal, I'll stop smoking if you turn that off.

TOD

Completely?

DR T

No more calls. Off.

TOD

What if I just put it on silent?

DR T

Off.

Tod is caught thinking about it. Dr Tom pulls out another cigarette and goes to light it from his existing one. Tod notices.

TOD

No more smoking, *at all*?

DR T

None.

TOD

Okay, it's a deal.

Tod turns off the phone and puts it away. Dr Tom puts out the butt. Tod puts on his pants and undershirt. Dr Tom remains the same.

TOD

Okay, so now what did you
say you...

DR T

Where do you live, Tod?

TOD

Sorry.

DR T

No, go ahead.

TOD

No, you go.

DR T

I just was wondering where you live?

TOD

Where do I live?

DR T

Yeah, where do you live?

Throughout, Dr Tom is seated in the corner, occasionally swigging from the flask. Tod is in the other corner. It is hot.

TOD

I live in an apartment.

DR T

In the city?

TOD

Yes. In the city.

DR T

Is it nice?

TOD

Is it nice? Yes it's nice. It's very nice.

DR T

That's good. That's good.

Pause. Tod hopes this line of questioning is over.

DR T

Married?

TOD
No.

DR T
Girlfriend?

TOD
No.

DR T
Boyfriend?

TOD
No!

DR T
Prostitutes?

TOD
Prostitutes? No, I wish...

A small smile shades Dr Tom's face.

TOD
What about you, are you married?

DR T
No.

TOD
Girl...

DR T
No. No boyfriend either. Nothin' currently.

TOD
Prostitutes?

Slight laugh from Dr Tom.

TOD
What? Really? Whhaa... When? Where?

DR T
Here, in the city.

TOD

Was it a long time ago?

Pause. Dr Tom stares off into space.

TOD

Was it a long time ago?

DR T

What's that?

TOD

Was it a long time ago?

DR T

A long time ago?...Two days.

TOD

Two days!?

DR T

Two days ago.

TOD

Two days ago. Why? What happened?

DR T

What happened? What do you think happened?

TOD

Why, though?

DR T

Why? Why? I mean, why not? I was lonely, I guess. Depressed...

TOD

I could never do it, get a prostitute...

DR T

It's not like climbing Mount Everest. You just do it. And then it's over.

Long Pause.

DR T

Do you like your life, Tod?

TOD

Oh sure. (*pause*) Sometimes. Yeah.

DR T

When?

TOD

When I can relax and take it easy, I guess.

DR T

How much money do you have?

TOD

On me?

DR T

No, not on you. I mean in general. In the bank.

TOD

Oh, I would say...about...I don't know, a decent amount.

DR T

Ten thousand dollars?

Tod laughs.

DR T

Twenty thousand?

Tod laughs more.

DR T

Thirty thousand?

TOD

Keep going.

DR T

More? Fifty.

TOD

You're way off. Don't you have any idea about today's economy?

DR T

Seventy-five thousand?

Tod laughs.

DR T

A hundred?

DR T

Two hundred?

DR T

Jesus Christ, Tod! How much money do you have?

TOD

Counting bonds, stocks, mutual funds...IRAs?

DR T

Sure.

TOD

Eight hundred seventy-five thousand. Around.

DR T

Holy fuck! That's a lot of money.

TOD

It'll be a million by the end of the year, I hope.

DR T

Wow! Good for you, Tod. I had no idea. I mean, to look at you, you don't think...

Dr Tom takes sips of whiskey.

TOD

Thanks.

Pause.

DR T

God! It's hot as hell in here. You sure you don't wanna sip?

TOD

Oh, all right. What the hell, right?

DR T

Sure.

Tod takes a drink, he winces slightly.

DR T

Almost a million dollars.

TOD

Not quite, though.

DR T

That's incredible, Tod. What'r you gonna spend it on?

TOD

Well, I'm not, really. I mean, my plan is to retire by thirty-five, maybe forty...

DR T

How old are you?

TOD

Twenty-eight.

DR T

Sounds reasonable.

TOD

Yes. And then get a boat, a sailboat, and sail all over the place, all around the world, and see places...

DR T

By yourself?

TOD

Well, no, not by myself. Hopefully, by that time I'll be married and we can go together...

DR T

That sounds nice. It sounds real nice. Just you and missus Tod in Rio...and Barthelona...and Hong Kong...

TOD

That's the plan.

Long pause. Dr Tom drifts, Tod get dressed.

TOD

What about you?

DR T

What's that?

TOD

I said what about...you?

Tod freezes against back corner.

DR T

Me, oh, I don't know, Tod.

TOD

How's that?

DR T

I'm just...I don't know...There's not much...To start, well, you don't wanna hear about all my problems...

Dr Tom looks at Tod who is stuck to the corner not breathing, just looking around the elevator at Dr Tom's face and his own face in the reflections.

DR T

Jesus, man. You look like you're about to explode.

TOD

I'm all right. (*very little movement*)

DR T

You look like shit. Jesus. Just breath. Relax. Sit down.

Dr Tom goes over, puts his arm around Tod and they both sit. Tod finally exhales, deep.

DR T

Yer burnin' up.

TOD

I'm all right. I think it was just that whiskey and the heat. I'm all right now.

Suddenly, Tod freezes again.

DR T

Tod, what is it? Talk to me. What's wrong?

Tod keeps rubbing, opening and closing his eyes.

DR T

It doesn't matter. Just tell me what it is. Maybe I can help.

Tod breaks free and moves to the opposite side.

TOD

Ahhh! It's just, I don't know. Jesus Christ. What the fuck!

DR T

Tod, it's okay. Just relax. Everything's gonna be okay. Okay? Just take it easy. Calm down.

TOD

No! Stay away!

DR T

Tod, it's okay. Relax. Talk to me.

They start to circle around the elevator, Tod facing Dr Tom who follows him trying to help.

TOD

It's just, your face, my face! Oh, fuck!

DR T

Tod, what is it? Huh? Come on, buddy. Just talk to me. Come on. It's hot as hell in here. Just breath and relax.

TOD

Your face is moving.

DR T

Okay, my face is moving. What else?

TOD

My face is moving!

DR T

Okay, your face is moving. Whaddaya mean moving? How's it moving?

TOD

It's like melting. Like a painting. Watercolors. Melting.

Dr Tom opens the little door where the phone is located, pulls it out and tries to get it to work. There is no response, no dial tone, nothing. Dr. Tom smashes it, kicks it, and lets it hang.

DR T

Okay, Tod. That's good. It's all right. Just deal with it Tod. Deal with the problem. Okay, it's gonna be okay. Fuuuuuuuuk!

TOD

Oh, shit! Oh, shit! Oh shit! Fuck! What is happening! I must be losing my mind. Oh God!

Dr Tom pulls him down to their knees, face to face.

DR T

(his hands hold Tod's face) No, Tod. Look at me. Now look at me. Tod. Look at me. Okay.

TOD

(almost crying) Oh, Jesus. Oh, God. Oh, God...

DR T

Tod!! Look at me. You're not going crazy. Okay? Look at me. You're not. All right. You took some acid, okay. Some low grade acid. All right?

TOD

Oh, God! Oh, God! What?...

DR T

I did too. That sweet breath, that was no sweet breath. It was acid. Lysergic acid. The dreaded lysergic.

TOD

Wha....You gave me acid? Wha...Why? Oh, god! Oh, god! Oh, god! Oh, god! Oh, god! Oh god!

Tod runs around trying to get out.

DR T

Tod. Tod! Calm down. Relax. You just have to relax and go with it.

TOD

Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhh!

Tod ends up scrunched in the corner, hiding from the world.
Dr Tom goes through Tod's stuff.

DR T

Okay, Tod! Look, you just have to take it easy. This is a new experience for you, I know. But it's gonna be okay, all right?

Dr Tom puts Tod's cell phone on the ground and stamps it to pieces. Tod notices.

TOD

What the hell are you doing?

DR T

We can't have that, Tod. Trust me.

TOD

Now what are you doing? Please, stop.

Dr Tom finds the Palm Pilot and smashes it. Tod makes a move to crawl over to Dr Tom. He makes an angry animal face with a "Rrrrrrrrrrrrah!" that scares Tod.

TOD

No, please. Why are you doing that? Ahhhhhhhhhh!

DR T

We can't have contact with the outside world right now, that would be bad.

TOD

But why?

Dr Tom kneeling, his hands breaking up the remnants of the Palm Pilot.

DR T

Why? Because we're on a journey now. You and me. You, my friend, just took your first two hits of acid and I'm proud of you, Tod, really I am.

TOD

But why?

DR T

Why? Why? Why? Because Tod, I'm trying to help you. I told you at the beginning, I'm a doctor. I help people.

TOD

Oh, God! Oh, God! Oh, God! Oh God! Oh God...

DR T

Look, Tod. You might as well relax and go with it. We've got about five or six more hours of fun. Just calm down. Breath and it'll be okay.

TOD

Oh, God! How could you do this? I thought you were a nice person? Oh, God.

DR T

Nice. Nice? I am nice, Tod. I'm helping you.

TOD

Oh, fuck you. This isn't real. Fuck you. This isn't real. Fuck you.

DR T

You might as well come out of the corner and enjoy it.

TOD

Fuck you!

DR T

Why? What am I doing?

TOD

Fuck you! Fuck you! Fuck you!

Sitting, Dr Tom goes to light up a cigarette.

Tod lunges at Dr Tom, trying to choke him and a short wrestling brawl ensues. Quickly, Dr Tom takes control, gets Tod on the ground (head downstage) and sits on top of him with his legs pinning Tod's arms, his hands over Tod's mouth.

DR T

Tod, Tod, Tod, Tod, Tod! Goddamit, Tod! I don't want to hurt you. All right? Shhhhhh...Just calm down. Look, I'm not gonna break your computer, all right? All right? (*takes hands off mouth, pause*) God, Tod...(*sits back, pause*) I don't know, Tod. I'm sorry. I didn't mean...This wasn't something I meant to do...I don't wanna hurt you, or scare you, or trick you...It's just...I don't know what I'm trying to say or do...I just...I just want to help you, as strange as that sounds...you know...(*pause*) You're an explorer, Tod. You are. That's why you want your sailboat. And that's good. To go off like a little skipper and explore this spinning top. That's good. (*he gets off Tod*) But you're not exploring right now, are you?... You've stopped asking questions, and it's not just you, we all have: What am I doing? Why am I here? To work here? and begin a slow descent into madness? The stupidity of it all, until you don't even realize what you're saying...or doing...or where you're going or where you've been... You're the victim, Tod. And we're all the victim. And I'm sorry. I didn't mean to trick you. I'm sorry...But maybe if you can face the madness head on, dead on, right now, then maybe some of those watercolors will remain, Tod. Maybe... Maybe you can move into Technicolor. Maybe...

Tod remains in the fetal position, his hands covering his face, sobbing. Dr Tom leans back, right knee up, right hand to his forehead. With a little smile but also close to tears, he very sweetly and quietly begins singing to Tod, like a Mother soothing a baby to sleep with a lullabye.

DR T

In the town where I was born
Lived a man who sailed to Sea.
And he told us of his life
In the land of submarines.
So we sailed on to the sun
And we found the Sea of Green
And we lived beneath the waves,
In our Yellow Submarine.

We all live in a Yellow Submarine,
Yellow Submarine, Yellow Submarine...

The lights slowly fade out to black during the lullabye.

Blackout