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**FEVER/DREAM**  
an adaptation of Calderón's  
*Life is a Dream*

By Sheila Callaghan

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*Life is a Dream*

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*A stroke (/) marks the point of interruption in overlapping dialogue. When the stroke is not immediately followed by text, the next line should occur on the last syllable of the word before the slash— not an overlap but a concise interruption*

### **ACT ONE**

The basement. Darkness.

Sounds: dripping water. Rumbling boiler. A fluorescent light struggling to buzz on, no light. An ancient fax machine. Maybe the room is lit (very vaguely) by the little green "ON" switches on all the old machines.

We're here for quite a while, taking in the sounds.

Then:

The sound of an old-fashioned office phone ring.

Once.

Twice.

A voice in the darkness, the voice of SEGIS:

SEGIS

CustomerservicehowmayIhelpyou.

The light flickers on for a tiny moment. We see the hunched figure of a man over a desk piled with papers.

Darkness again. Silence. Then:

SEGIS (cont.)

I'msorrytohearyou'vebeenhavingtroubles.

The light buzzes on again, this time for longer.

We see: puddles of water on the floor near tangled electrical equipment. Exposed pipes. Piles and piles of papers. A drain in the center of the floor. An ancient fax machine. Grey concrete. Beat-up metal filing cabinets. Towering messy piles of papers. An enormous sign that reads "NO TRESPASSING."

Also, stacks and stacks of books. Text books, reference books, literature, etc.

It's a graveyard for outdated equipment.

Yellowing newspaper clippings are pasted to the wall and the floor, along with several yellowing newspaper photos of BILL BASIL. The articles are highlighted and circled here and there.

Centrally: A rusted freight elevator door from the 40's, with old numbers up to 77 and a wand.

A chute off to the side.

We can smell the asbestos.

SEGIS wears a T-shirt, stained and foul, and a pair of horrendous jeans. He is unshaven, unwashed, and grips the phone receiver as though it's part of his hand. His beard is down to his chest and his hair hangs in greasy ropes down his back.

SEGIS (cont.)

This must be very frustrating for you.

A pile of papers drops from the chute. Seconds later, an apple. Then, a handful of loose cooked macaroni and some lettuce leaves.

The fluorescent light buzzes off again. Darkness.

SEGIS (cont.)

I'll connect you with billing immediately, thank you for calling.

Silence, save the ubiquitous ambient noise.

More silence.

The phone rings again.

SEGIS

Customer service how may I help you.

A beat.

I'll connect you with billing immediately, thank you for calling.

Suddenly, a sound we haven't heard before... a screeching of metallic, then a booming sonorous 'waaannnnnnng', then the sound of un-oiled gears turning.

The entire room shakes.

In the darkness, a dirty yellow light flickers behind the panel of the freight elevator. The wand moves very very slowly from the letter L to the letter B.

The noise stops.

Then, the miserable creak of a stuck metal door trying to slide open.

Inside the lit elevator, two figures. One is dressed as a bike messenger, complete with helmet and shoulder bag. The other is a nerdy little thing.

They are both frozen in terror.

Where the heck are we?  
ROSE

Um.  
CLAIRE

What button did you push?  
ROSE

I didn't. Your bag must have—  
CLAIRE

WOW WOW WOW. WHAT IS THAT SMELL.  
ROSE

Rosie—  
CLAIRE

Don't call me that.  
ROSE

Something died here... something large....  
CLAIRE

Where's the light?  
ROSE

ROSE fumbles around for a light switch.

...when a thing decomposes the particles are released into the air so the smell is actually tiny little pieces of dead-thing....  
CLAIRE

Claire, I wanna— okay this might not be the time for this conversation...  
ROSE

I know what you're / going to say

CLAIRE

But you promised you would hold / it together

ROSE

Right, right...

CLAIRE

You have a Very Important Role in all this

ROSE

I know, / I know

CLAIRE

And I REALLY like, need you to... Oh, wait, huh...

ROSE

What?

CLAIRE

Feels like a, a breaker, or...

ROSE

ROSE flips a switch. Worklight floods the room. SEGIS stares at them in terror. They stare back. No one moves.

WHAT IS THAT?

CLAIRE  
(horrified whisper)

Don't...

ROSE  
(quietly)

WHAT IS THAT?

CLAIRE

...move...

ROSE

SEGIS moves slightly. The girls yelp and run to the other side of the room.

CustomerservicehowmayIhelpyou.

SEGIS

Oh hi. We're looking for the 77<sup>th</sup> floor...

ROSE

SEGIS