

The beginning of

A STRANGER HERE MYSELF (from **COME AGAIN**)

a play in one act

by Rich Orloff

Place: A hotel room

Time: The night before a big meeting

Characters: PATRICIA, 40's or so, a stressed businesswoman
SHAYNE, 30's – 40's, a seductive movie star
BRUCE, 40's or so, Patricia's ex-husband of one year
CHELSEA, 30's – 40's, Patricia's hedonistic next-door neighbor
(*Note:* In the program, only Patricia should be listed.
The other characters should be a surprise.)

Late evening. PATRICIA, a smart but stressed businesswoman in her 40's, looks at her very well organized piles of items she'll need for the next day. She wears pajamas and has a mental check list, as she usually does.

PATRICIA

Okay... notebook charging... phone charging...
alarm set... phone alarm set in case I sleep
through hotel alarm... handouts for presentation...
flashdrive with my Power Point images...
second flashdrive in case someone messes up
the first flashdrive... vitamins and Power Bar
in lieu of a hearty breakfast... clothes showing
confident strength without overt aggression...
overpriced souvenirs to win back my kids'
affection after three nights with their dickhead father...
What have I forgotten? What have I forgotten?...

(quickly:)

Notebook – phone – alarm – alarm – handouts –
flashdrive – flashdrive – vitamins – Power Bar –
clothes – dickhead. You have never been
more prepared for a sales pitch in your life.
You're not only going to land the account,
it's going to be a smoooth landing.
All you need to do now is relax and sleep.

As she talks, she begins turning off the lights in the room.
She gets into bed.

PATRICIA (cont'd)

Relax and sleep... Relax and sleep...
Relax and sleep...

She gets comfortable and turns off the lamp on her nightstand. Although the room becomes dark, a light – not from a literal source as much as a psychological one – shines brightly on Patricia's face. She is *totally* awake. She sighs.

Patricia turns on the light. She gets out of bed and looks through her open suitcase.

PATRICIA (cont'd)

Maybe I'm more stressed than I thought.
No – You're totally in control and centered.
You're a strong, powerful woman. You know
what you want and you know how to get it.

She removes a bottle of pills from her medicine bag.

PATRICIA (cont'd)

With an Ambien.

She pops one into her mouth and swallows it. It takes some effort.

PATRICIA (cont'd)

Next time water. Or maybe scotch.
And now, relax and sleep... Relax and sleep...
Relax and sleep...

Patricia has climbed back into bed and turned off the nightstand lamp. The room is dark again, except for the bright light on her *totally* awake face.

Patricia sighs and then turns on the lamp. She gets out of bed and looks through her briefcase. She takes out three books.

PATRICIA (cont'd)

(these probably aren't the titles as
much as Patricia's response to them:)

How to Make Your X in a Room of Y Chromosomes...
How to Get Ahead and Still Find Time to Make Your Bed...
How to Get Ahead Without Giving Head.

Patricia sighs and tosses the books down. She notices the TV and turns on the remote.

PATRICIA (cont'd)

Crap.

(changes channels:)

Crap.

(changes channels:)

Crap.

(changes channels, pause, then:)

Crapomercial.

Patricia turns off the TV and puts the remote down. She sighs. She notices the minifridge.

PATRICIA (cont'd)

Hmm. I wonder if they have any single malts. Maybe something nice and peaty.

Patricia opens the minifridge, rummages around and takes out a small bottle.

PATRICIA (cont'd)

Well, it's the same color as scotch.

She unscrews the top of the bottle and lifts up the bottle, then pauses.

PATRICIA (cont'd)

Wait a second. Think this out. On one hand, you probably shouldn't mix Ambien and alcohol. On the other hand, face it, you're really nervous about tomorrow. Scotch has never been a problem. Ambien has never been a problem. Ergo, a small amount of both shouldn't be *two* problems.

(thinks a moment, then:)

Girl, you need to shut your brain down.

Patricia makes a toast.

PATRICIA (cont'd)

(with anger, or at least defiance:)

To Bruce, on the one-year anniversary of our divorce. I –

(has a change of heart:)

I forgive you completely.

(then:)

Scumbag.

Patricia has a drink. The scotch has considerably more bite than she expected. She coughs, makes sounds, bends over a bit.

PATRICIA (cont'd)

God. Whoever made this hates Scotland.

She looks at the bottle. There's a little left.

PATRICIA (cont'd)

Oh what the hell.

She lifts the bottle, ready to toast again.

PATRICIA (cont'd)

(probably not quite as open-hearted:)

Ummm... Oh. To my neighbor Chelsea.

I forgive you completely.

(then:)

Slut.

Patricia finishes the scotch. It still has a lot of bite. Patricia sighs.

PATRICIA (cont'd)

Okay... Relax and sleep... Relax and sleep...

Relax and sleep...

Patricia has climbed back into bed and turned off the nightstand lamp. The room is dark again, except for the bright light on her *totally* awake face.

PATRICIA (cont'd)

Oh shit.

(inspired)

Oh! Of course.

Patricia turns on the lamp, gets out of bed, goes to her suitcase, and removes a vibrator. She holds it up to the sky.

PATRICIA (cont'd)

Excelsior!

Patricia gets into bed with the vibrator, gets comfortable, and turns off the lamp. The room is dark.

PATRICIA (cont'd)

And we're off...

For a moment, nothing. Then Patricia turns on the nightstand lamp, picks up her phone, touches it, and yells:

PATRICIA (cont'd)

Buy batteries!

She tosses her vibrator in her suitcase and sighs. She looks at her fingers.

PATRICIA (cont'd)

I guess it's just you and me, hand.
Think you're up to it?

Patricia has climbed back into bed and turned off the nightstand lamp.

PATRICIA (cont'd)

(with heavy yawns)

Okay... all right now... ohhh...

A slight snore. A moment later, the whole room is brightly lit – in a different way than before.

PATRICIA (cont'd)

(waking up:)

Oh my... I must've... How long did I sleep?

She looks at the cell phone on her nightstand.

PATRICIA (cont'd)

Twenty seconds. Well that should be enough.

(gets an idea:)

Okay, fingers. I know it's been awhile,
but I'm sure with the right fantasy...

Patricia relaxes. The light on her face is soft. Her fingers are under the covers.

PATRICIA (cont'd)

Okay... I'm halfway through a business trip,
staying at a *very* swanky hotel, the kind
Bruce used to say we couldn't afford because
he didn't believe in my potential. I'm sipping
my usual: 18-year-old Macallan, the iconic
single malt scotch, with one ice cube, only one,
just enough to help release the scotch's bold
flavor: robust, with just a hint of wood smoke.
Then *he* walks into the room. I've seen all
his movies, but he's even more handsome
in person. He approaches me and says:

SHAYNE, a movie star, appears from the darkness.

SHAYNE

(without one iota of enthusiasm,
as if he's done this 400 times:)

I take one look at you, and I need no other.

PATRICIA

(annoyed)

And then he says, with *lustful enthusiasm*:

SHAYNE

(with even *less* enthusiasm:)

I take one look at you, and I need no other.

PATRICIA

(more upset, overlapping with the above:)

Why are you talking like that?

SHAYNE

You've imagined this fantasy a thousand times.
I can only give so many performances
before I go stale!

PATRICIA

It's my favorite fantasy.

SHAYNE

It's your *only* fantasy.

PATRICIA

What's wrong with it?

SHAYNE

It's *dull*. It's become less like erotica and
more like an infomercial for the scotch industry.

PATRICIA

Look, it's my fantasy, and it works.
Now let's try it again. This time with *feeling*.

SHAYNE

I'll try.

(muttering to himself:)

When I told my agent I wanted a dream job,
this wasn't what I meant.

PATRICIA

Then *he* walks into the room. I've seen all
his movies, but he's even more handsome
in person. He walks up to me and says:

SHAYNE

(very, very, *very* peppy:)

I take one look at you, and I need no other.

PATRICIA

(angry and overlapping:)

What was that?! I asked for *feeling*.

SHAYNE

You didn't say *which* feeling.

PATRICIA

Damn it! I need you to turn me on and get me off so I can get a good night's sleep and be rested and alert for my *very* important meeting in the morning!!!

SHAYNE

(simple)

What's my motivation?

PATRICIA

I need a good night's sleep.

SHAYNE

And that turns me on *how?*

PATRICIA

Thousands of dollars are at stake. If I land this contract, I'll probably get a bonus so big I'll never again have to plead with my ex- for a few extra bucks.

SHAYNE

You sound desperate.

PATRICIA

I may look strong, but the real me, the *real* real me, is *incredibly* desperate.

SHAYNE

Now *that* turns me on.

PATRICIA

Shall we?

SHAYNE

I'll do my best.

PATRICIA

Thank you.

Patricia closes her eyes.

PATRICIA (cont'd)

Then *he* walks into the room. I've seen all his movies, but he's even more handsome in person. He walks up to me and says:

SHAYNE

(pretty good)

I take one look at you, and I need no other.

PATRICIA

Again.

BRUCE, Patricia's ex-husband, appears during the next speech, which should begin with Shayne but blend with Bruce so that it ends with him.

SHAYNE blending into BRUCE

I take one look at you, and I need no other.

PATRICIA

Again!

BRUCE

I take one look at you, and I need no other.

PATRICIA

What happened to your voice?

BRUCE

I adore you.

PATRICIA

It sounds familiar.

BRUCE

I worship –

Patricia opens her eyes.

PATRICIA

Bruce!!!

BRUCE

Hi, darling.

PATRICIA

What the hell are you doing here?

BRUCE

You must've wanted me here.

PATRICIA

I did not.

BRUCE

I'm here, aren't I?

PATRICIA

I do not have sexual attraction towards
my ex-husband.

BRUCE

Why not? I still desire *you*.

PATRICIA

Along with every other woman on the block.

BRUCE

I always loved the fire in you. When we had
fights, sometimes I just basked in your flames.

PATRICIA

That was basking?! I thought it was "not listening".

BRUCE

There's that fire I loved.

PATRICIA

(to Shayne:)

Will you tell him to go away?

SHAYNE

I kinda like him.

BRUCE

You should've gotten the Oscar last year;
you were robbed.

SHAYNE

I definitely like him.

BRUCE

You know, Patricia was once adventurous.

PATRICIA

No, no. I wasn't. I just went along
with what you wanted. Reluctantly.

BRUCE

You were the one who suggested
we have sex in the airport bathroom.

PATRICIA

We were drinking. We had a long wait
between flights.

BRUCE

You were so hot, like a porn TSA agent.

PATRICIA

That was a long time ago,
before kids and work –

BRUCE

And then you started resisting.

PATRICIA

I didn't resist. I was tired.
And then you pushed. *Then* I resisted.

BRUCE

And resisted and resisted –

SHAYNE

Sorry to interrupt, but if you're going to
spend this fantasy arguing with each other,
could you at least do it *while wrestling in mud?!!*

PATRICIA

(to Bruce:)

I am going to close my eyes again, and
you are going to fade away. The only voice
I want to hear is the one which I know will
make me fully and completely aroused.

BRUCE

(to Shayne:)

Don't leave teeth marks.
She hasn't liked that in years.

PATRICIA

Go away.

BRUCE

Now she likes her men like she likes
her scotch: no bite.

PATRICIA

Enough!

BRUCE

Okay.

Patricia closes her eyes and takes a breath.

PATRICIA

Then *he* walks into the room. I've seen all his movies, but he's even more handsome in person. He walks up to me and says:

CHELSEA, Patricia's next door neighbor, appears.

CHELSEA

I take one look at you, and I need no other.

PATRICIA

Chelsea!

CHELSEA

I always knew you had the hots for me.

PATRICIA

That's not true!

CHELSEA

Don't worry, it's mutual.

PATRICIA

How can – What would your husband say?

CHELSEA

He'd say, "Can I watch?"

PATRICIA

(skeptical)

Really?

CHELSEA

Oh, yeah. For years we've had a bet who would get you first.

PATRICIA

What was the consolation prize – my husband?

CHELSEA

I would've preferred having you.

BRUCE

(to Patricia, about her and Chelsea:)

You know, I often thought there was
a spark between the two of you.

PATRICIA

You're imagining things.

BRUCE

Well if I'm going to imagine something,
I'd rather imagine hot lesbian sex
than you trying to fall asleep.

CHELSEA

What exactly did you fantasize?

BRUCE

Well, you know, I'd look out our window
and see you watering the front lawn, all sweaty,
wearing a jogging bra and running shorts –

PATRICIA

This is *not* turning me on.

CHELSEA and BRUCE

Shush!

CHELSEA (cont'd)

(to Bruce:)

Tell me more.

BRUCE

The day you moved into the neighborhood,
property values got engorged.

PATRICIA

I can't believe I married this man.

BRUCE

I can believe I married you.

PATRICIA

Then why did you –

BRUCE

If you had agreed to an open marriage,
I would've never had to cheat.

PATRICIA

I admire you.

BRUCE

(surprised)

You do?

PATRICIA

Yeah, you can pack so much crap
into so few words.

BRUCE

How about one last time – for old time's sake?

PATRICIA

If I never see you again, I'll be a happy woman.

BRUCE

Great, I brought a blindfold.

Bruce takes out a blindfold.

SHAYNE

Ooo, a blindfold, what fun.
Anyone bring any rope?

CHELSEA

Right here!

Chelsea takes out some rope.

PATRICIA

That's not what I want!

SHAYNE

You'd prefer leather?

CHELSEA

(to Shayne:)

I didn't know you were kinky.

SHAYNE

Well –

PATRICIA

He's not! Are you?

SHAYNE

What can I say? To some I say I want
a woman with a nice rack. Truth is, what
I really want is a woman *on* a nice rack.

CHELSEA

(to Patricia, flirtatiously:)

You know what *I* think we should do?

PATRICIA

So how are the kids?

CHELSEA

She always does this when I'm about to discuss sex.

PATRICIA

You're exaggerating.

CHELSEA

You're a great neighbor and all, but really,
when I *hinted* that my husband and I had
a threesome, you asked how our kids were.

PATRICIA

That was –

CHELSEA

When I hinted *I* had a threesome with
another couple, you asked how our kids were.

PATRICIA

I don't remember –

CHELSEA

When I gave a *sliver* of a hint that I wanted
to explore my lesbian side with you, you
started blabbering about how *your* kids were.

SHAYNE

(to Patricia:)

Did it ever once occur to you... that
the you you know is only a small sliver
of the you you are?

BRUCE

(to Patricia:)

Well?

SHAYNE
Well?

CHELSEA
Well?

PATRICIA
Cassie just got on the girl's soccer team.

A beat, then:

BRUCE
I think it's time to use the blindfold.

CHELSEA
(to Patricia:)
Do you like your rope tied loose or tight?

SHAYNE
I brought a whip.

CHELSEA
I brought whipped cream.

SHAYNE
Ooo.

Chelsea squirts some whipped cream into Shayne's mouth.

SHAYNE (cont'd)
Yum, what's this flavor?

He reads the label.

SHAYNE (cont'd)
"Essence of Patricia".

BRUCE
I want some!

Chelsea squirts some whipped cream into Bruce's mouth and then into her own. She offers some to Patricia.

PATRICIA
(becoming vulnerable)
I don't *like* whipped cream! I don't like any of this! Why are you all doing this to me?

SHAYNE

Who knows? For a good time, call your subconscious.

PATRICIA

Please go. All of you. Please.

Shayne, Bruce and Chelsea don't move.

PATRICIA (cont'd)

I mean it. I, I think I need to be alone.

SHAYNE

But you don't understand.

BRUCE

If you remove the part of you that
still lusts after your ex-husband –

CHELSEA

that harbors desires for your neighbor –

SHAYNE

that imagines adventures beyond
the ones in your comfort zone –

CHELSEA

then you'll be less than alone –

BRUCE

because you won't be with you either.