

A THORN IN HER SIDE

A Short Play

By

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AT RISE

We see a queen-sized bed on the stage. Someone is underneath the covers and is moving, though we can't tell exactly what is going on.

LEWIS, age 50, enters the room. He is wearing a business suit, his tie askew. He's carrying a dozen roses.

LEWIS

Estelle?

(The movement under the covers stops abruptly)

ESTELLE

Lewis?

LEWIS

Whatcha' doing?

ESTELLE

(Hesitantly) Nothing.

LEWIS

Are you OK?

ESTELLE

Yes.

LEWIS

Are you ...alone?

ESTELLE

Yes.

LEWIS

Good news. C'mon. 'Stell, what are you doing?

ESTELLE

Nothing.

LEWIS

You're doing something.

ESTELLE

Not really.

LEWIS

We've only got about 30 minutes to get ready.

ESTELLE

Oh...right. No thank you.

LEWIS

Estelle, it's our anniversary party. We invited people.

ESTELLE

Yes.

LEWIS

Yes, you'll come out?

ESTELLE

No.

LEWIS

Estelle, you have to. It's our party...we can't not show up.

ESTELLE

You go on ahead. I'll catch up later.

LEWIS

Nice try. C'mon Stelly, just let me see your smiling face. C'mon...I brought you something.

ESTELLE, age 50, slowly uncovers her head, holding the covers up to her chin.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

Hi.

ESTELLE

Hello. So...how are you?

LEWIS

A little pressed for time. You?

ESTELLE

Wonderful. The flowers are lovely.

LEWIS

What's under there?

ESTELLE

Under?

LEWIS

There.

ESTELLE

Nothing. Really.

LEWIS

It's gotta be something.

ESTELLE

It's hardly anything.

LEWIS

Estelle!

ESTELLE reaches under the covers and, very slowly, pulls out the longest, industrial flashlight known to man.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

Good God. What, EXACTLY, are you doing with that?

ESTELLE

Reading.

LEWIS

Reading?

ESTELLE

Just reading.

LEWIS

What are you reading?

ESTELLE

Nothing. Really.

LEWIS sits next to Estelle, puts the roses at the foot of the bed.

LEWIS

Please. Estelle. As we speak, about 80 people we know, and some we even like, are gathering in the pine-paneled splendor of the Rotary Club. We are expected within the hour so that they can raise a glass to our 27 years of wedded bliss.

ESTELLE

Do you really need me to go?

LEWIS

Yep. I was hoping you'd put on your dancing shoes and we'd impress everyone with our Fred and Ginger imitations.

ESTELLE

Gee, Lew, I'd really rather not.

LEWIS

What is more important than our anniversary party? (starts to pull at the covers)

ESTELLE

OK, OK...I'll show you.

ESTELLE slowly pulls the covers back to reveal about 30 comic books.

LEWIS

Comic books?

ESTELLE

Yes.

LEWIS

You're hiding under the blankets with a flashlight and reading...?

ESTELLE

Comic books.

LEWIS

Why?

ESTELLE

I like them.

LEWIS picks up some of the books.

LEWIS

Lois Lane? Where'd you get these?

ESTELLE

Ebay.

LEWIS

How long have you had 'em?

ESTELLE

Oh, you know. A while.

LEWIS

How come?

ESTELLE

Because.

LEWIS

(Looking at his watch) Help me out, here, OK honey?

ESTELLE

I like the stories.

LEWIS

I'da never pegged you for a Lois Lane fan.

ESTELLE

It's not her.

LEWIS

No?

ESTELLE

It's the other one.

LEWIS

Which other one?

ESTELLE

Thorn.

LEWIS

What's Thorn?

ESTELLE

She's another superhero.

LEWIS

Never heard of her.

ESTELLE

She was only around for a couple of years in the late 60s. Her real name is Rose and she's a librarian. Her dad is a cop but the mafia murder him. Rose has a psychotic break - she starts sleepwalking, see, and while she's sleepwalking, she turns into the Thorn, a wild-woman who fights crime and tries to avenge her father's death.

LEWIS

Uh-huh. (pointing to a page in a comic book) So, are these breasts supercharged?

ESTELLE

You wish. (pause) She's only the Thorn when she's asleep. She wakes up every morning all bruised and puffy from beating up the bad guys. She feels tired and lonely and...sad.

LEWIS

Well, crime fighting isn't for everyone. Does she ever catch the killers?

ESTELLE

I don't know yet.

LEWIS

Well, after we get home, you can finish 'em up. But, now, we gotta get the show on the road.

ESTELLE

Lewis, I'm not going.

LEWIS

Why not?

ESTELLE

Because.

LEWIS

Because why?

ESTELLE

Because I can't be what you want me to be tonight.

LEWIS

I just want you to be yourself.

ESTELLE

No, you want the other half of our comedy team, someone light and airy and full of banter. But I can't do it tonight.

LEWIS

This isn't like you. (pointing to the comics) And this isn't like you.

ESTELLE

I don't know what to tell you. I found one in Dad's attic a few weeks ago. It must have been mine when I was a kid, right? I don't really remember. It was the wildest thing, Lewis. I'm sitting there in the attic and I find this old comic book and I sit down to take a breather, you know? And I'm reading this old comic and I can't stop reading it. Then, I realize I'm still sitting in the attic and it's like, almost two hours since I went up there. I don't know...I just, couldn't stop thinking about... You know, how did it end? Did she find her dad's killer? Did she ever figure out she was a superhero? Did she ever...wake up?

LEWIS

Why didn't you tell me any of this?

ESTELLE

I was embarrassed. I didn't want you to think I lost my marbles.

LEWIS

I wouldn't think that.

ESTELLE

It's not normal, Lewis. A 50-year-old woman, reading comic books, obsessed with a silly superhero. It's strange.

LEWIS

Not necessarily.

ESTELLE

Lew. Really.

LEWIS

OK...It's not your every day.

ESTELLE

That's just it. I'm not having an 'every day.' Since dad...God, it's been almost a year and I still feel like crap most of the time.

LEWIS

Stelly. We didn't have to throw ourselves a shindig.

ESTELLE

It's our anniversary. I should be, you know, happy and partying. But instead, I want to stay where it's quiet and dark. I'm sorry, I'm letting you down, I know.

LEWIS

In 27 years, you've NEVER let me down.

ESTELLE

I just want to get past it.

LEWIS

You will. We will. (He looks at some more of the comics) So...what do you say we find out what happens to our gal?

ESTELLE

Now?

LEWIS

Rotarians and an open bar? They'll never miss us.

ESTELLE

Seriously?

LEWIS

Hey! Let's do dramatic readings...You be Rose and Thorn and I'll be...everyone else.

ESTELLE

Lewis...(she touches his face lovingly) It's more fun with a flashlight!

They pull the blankets over their heads as the stage lights fade; a spotlight lingers on the dozen roses at the foot of the bed, then fades to black.