

ROOM 124

by:
Aaron Adair

ROOM 124

Players:

MANPRASAD, a middle-aged man

MADHURI, his wife

A busy roadside motel. Room 124.

AT RISE: The sound of a car passing on a gravel road.

Headlights sweep the stage, briefly revealing Manprasad. He is standing downstage center in pajama bottoms. He is peering out his motel room window.

Behind him is Madhuri. She is in bed.

Again, the sound of a car passing, sweeping headlights and a glimpse of Manprasad at the window.

A third time, a car passes to the same effect.

It's 2 a.m.

MANPRASAD

You know. There are two kinds of joggers.

MADHURI

What?

MANPRASAD

There are two kinds of joggers.

Madhuri turns on a nightstand lamp.

Lights up.

MANPRASAD [continued]

There are joggers who run with a smile on their face and joggers who look miserable.

MADHURI

[*Annoyed*] It's two a.m., Manprasad.

MANPRASAD

As if every step is agony.

MADHURI

I can relate.

MANPRASAD

You don't jog.

MADHURI

No, but I know agony. Honestly, Man. It's two a.m.

MANPRASAD

I couldn't sleep.

MADHURI

So you wake me with your talking?

MANPRASAD

It's this noisy motel. I keep hearing the ice machine.

It's a cycle. A car pulls in. People get out. They go to their room. They come out with an ice bucket. They go to the machine. They scoop ice. The machine makes more.

MADHURI

More what?

MANPRASAD

Ice. Don't you see. A car pulls in. People get out. They go their room—

MADHURI

Yes. Yes. Stop it. I get it.

MANPRASAD

The machine makes more...

MADHURI

Good grief. Sleep, Man, sleep.

MANPRASAD

Sleep?

MADHURI

Yes, you remember sleep?

MANPRASAD

Sleep.

MADHURI

Yes.

MANPRASAD

Sleep.

MADHURI

Yes. Stop that.

MANPRASAD

Sleep...

MADHURI

Honestly.

MANPRASAD

Honesty is a virtue, Madh.

MADHURI

Not to a chubby woman in a new dress.

MANPRASAD

What?

MADHURI

Nothing. Come to bed. I can't sleep when you're up pacing and talking. And about what?
[Puh!] Ice machines and jogging.

MANPRASAD

Fat people should jog. Not me.

MADHURI

I think you're trying to provoke me. You're awake and you have nothing better to do than get my goat.

MANPRASAD

You sound paranoid and selfish.

MADHURI
Selfish?

MANPRASAD
I'm the one who can't sleep. What ever happened to kindness? Compassion?

MADHURI
Keep anybody awake until two a.m. and see how kind and compassionate they are.

MANPRASAD
You're not just anybody. You're my wife.

MADHURI
For the time being.

MANPRASAD
Ah! Ah! Did you hear that?

MADHURI
Hear what?

MANPRASAD
Ice.

MADHURI
No.

MANPRASAD
Falling?

MADHURI
No.

MANPRASAD
You didn't try.

MADHURI
You don't *try* to hear things. You either hear them or you don't.

MANPRASAD
[*Aside*] I think I'm losing my mind.

MADHURI
I mean. Can you turn your ears off and on? I can't.

MANPRASAD
Madh, I'm hearing voices again.

MADHURI
What?

MANPRASAD
In my head.

MADHURI
You're not making sense. How can you hear ice cubes in your head?

MANPRASAD
I said voices.

Pause.

Madh?

MADHURI
I heard you.

MANPRASAD
Voices?

MADHURI
Yes, voices. [*Exasperated*] But, why? Why now?

Manprasad shrugs.

I mean, there's no time. There's the wake. Buying flowers. Renting a car for Deepa. Sorting through mom's belongings. The service.

You know, the home will throw away anything we don't take.

MANPRASAD
Let them.

MADHURI
What?

MANPRASAD
Let them throw it all out.

MADHURI
She was my *mother*.

MANPRASAD

So.

MADHURI

She liked you. She stood up for you.

MANPRASAD

Humph...

MADHURI

Without her you wouldn't have a wife.

MANPRASAD

You mean, I wouldn't have a keeper.

MADHURI

She thought you were going places.

MANPRASAD

You never did.

MADHURI

Was I supposed to? I knew the truth. You hear voices.

MANPRASAD

And ice. Don't forget about the ice. That's new.

MADHURI

No. Forget the ice. I heard the ice. I was lying so you'd come to bed.

MANPRASAD

I tell you I hear voices. I tell you I hear ice cubes. I don't know which is real, and *you*.
[*Sing-song*] First you don't hear the ice. Then you do hear the ice.

MADHURI

O, don't play the victim, Man. Do you know how many nights I've had like this? How many sleepless nights, just like this, I've had to endure?

MANPRASAD

I don't count, if that's what you're asking.

MADHURI

That's not what I'm asking. I'm asking if you give a damn. About me.

I'm asking. For once, can't you ignore the voices?

MANPRASAD

No.

MADHURI

For just one night? The night before I bury my mother?

MANPRASAD

You don't understand.

MADHURI

I understand.

Madhuri picks up a bottle of pills from the nightstand.

You're hearing voices because you refuse to take these.

She shakes the bottle violently.

These!

MANPRASAD

[*Authoritatively*] Those are poison.

MADHURI

Only in your mind. Not in the minds of your doctors. Not in the minds of— wait. Is that what the voices are telling you?

MANPRASAD

What?

MADHURI

That these are poison?

MANPRASAD

[*Indignant*] NO.

MADHURI

They are. They are, aren't they?

MANPRASAD

How would you know? You can't hear them.

MADHURI

O, I hear them. I was lying again.

[*Loudly, mocking*] "Don't take them, Man! They're poison, Man! Poison! Poison!"

MANPRASAD
Shut up!

MADHURI
Poison!

MANPRASAD
[*Hands over ears*] Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!

MADHURI
The hell I will. Take the God damn pills.

MANPRASAD
No.

MADHURI
I want to see if they're poison. I hope they are. I want to see you in agony. I want to see panic in your eyes. Your last, gasping breath. Then, I'll get some sleep!

Quick pause.

MANPRASAD
Damn you.

He takes the pill bottle.

It'll be your funeral if they kill me.

MADHURI
No. I'll survive. I'm plenty strong.

MANPRASAD
Too strong.

MADHURI
No husband of mine should need pills. Is that my fault too? Should—

MANPRASAD
Wait. Wait.

MADHURI
What?

MANPRASAD
Ice.

MADHURI
Ice?

MANPRASAD
It's about to fall. I hear the motor.

They listen.

MADHURI
I hear nothing.

MANPRASAD
Wait.

They wait a few seconds more.

MADHURI
Nothing.

MANPRASAD
[Smiling] Nothing.

[Broader smile] Maybe it's out of water?

MADHURI
Good. Can we sleep now?

Madhuri gets back in bed. She props herself up in a sitting position.

MANPRASAD
No ice...

MADHURI
No.

MANPRASAD
What a wonderful thing.

MADHURI
Yes.

MANPRASAD
Madh?

MADHURI
Hmm?

MANPRASAD

Why do some people jog with smiles on their faces?

MADHURI

I don't know. They're lucky I guess.

She reaches for the light.

MANPRASAD

Don't.

MADHURI

Why?

MANPRASAD

Water.

MADHURI

Get me some?

MANPRASAD

Yes.

Manprasad steps offstage right and returns with two cups.

He sits on the side of the bed and stares into the distance.

MADHURI

Man? Water?

MANPRASAD

Sorry. Yes.

He gives her a cup.

MADHURI

You'll feel better in the morning.

MANPRASAD

[*Unusually apologetic in tone*] Madh, I'm sorry.

MADHURI

Don't, Man. Don't listen to the voices. They're never right.

MANPRASAD

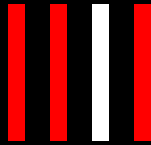
Is that possible? I mean, if you flip a coin several times, it will show heads on some flips, tails on others. It's the law of probabilities.

MADHURI

The voices don't know that. They don't know logic.

MANPRASAD

But, odds are. I mean. Sometimes. Sometimes, they've got to be right. Don't they?



**FIND OUT HOW
THIS PLAY ENDS.**

E-MAIL
aaron@jellobox.com