

(An elevator door opens, and there is a click of high heels as someone steps in. We hear the elevator travels for a few floors, then stops. A man steps in, scuffing his shoes a bit.)

MIRIAM: What floor?

BRAD: Lobby.

(Miriam presses the button and the doors shut again. Quiet for a moment.)

BRAD: How's your night going?

MIRIAM: Fine.

BRAD: You staying here too?

MIRIAM: Mm-hmm.

BRAD: Nice, nice. Where are you from?

(Miriam ignores him, playing with her phone.)

BRAD: I'm Brad.

MIRIAM: Of course you are.

BRAD: You know, there's a nice bar in the lobby. You want to maybe –

MIRIAM: No, thanks.

BRAD: Wow. You won't let me buy you a drink?

MIRIAM: I don't drink.

BRAD: Buy you a soda, then.

MIRIAM: I said no.

BRAD: (Scoffs, offended)

(Suddenly we hear the elevator stop.)

BRAD: Damn it.

MIRIAM: It'll start up again.

BRAD: Elevator expert, are you?

MIRIAM: Just hit the button.

(Brad hits the button, which buzzes.)

BRAD: Nothing happened.

MIRIAM: Someone will fix it.

BRAD: I have somewhere to be.

MIRIAM: I thought you had plenty of time for drinks.

BRAD: Isn't there supposed to be some kind of intercom or something in elevators? So you can talk to the fire department or whatever?

MIRIAM: ...does this look like a young elevator to you? It's broken. Probably has been for ages.

BRAD: Well, it's a hazard.

MIRIAM: Yeah, well, speak to a manager about it, then.

(Brad takes out his phone instead.)

BRAD: Damn. No signal in here. Do you have one?

MIRIAM: No.

BRAD: Well, then what are we supposed to do?

MIRIAM: Just wait.

BRAD: (scoffs again) So we're just going to sit here in silence for however long it takes them to fix it?

MIRIAM: Silence doesn't seem to be your forte, but I would welcome it.

BRAD: (Pissed off) What's your problem?

MIRIAM: I'd just like to be left alone, that's all.

BRAD: Yeah, well, we're stuck here together for however long.

MIRIAM: And yet the option to stop talking is still on the table.

BRAD: You know what, I'm glad you didn't want to get a drink. Your attitude is ugly.

MIRIAM: Okay.

(Pause.)

BRAD: (makes an irritated sound)

(Brad tries his phone again, mashes a few elevator buttons, and paces a bit.)

BRAD: Sure hope this thing doesn't just plummet.

MIRIAM: Elevators generally don't do that.

BRAD: I don't know. All sorts of bad things can happen in elevators.

MIRIAM: Yup.

BRAD: There was that...what's her name. The girl in California, on that creepy footage.

MIRIAM: Elisa Lam.

BRAD: Yeah, her. You ever see that video? And then after what happened to her...

MIRIAM: It was tragic.

BRAD: It was creepy.

MIRIAM: Sure.

BRAD: You know some people think she haunts that hotel?

MIRIAM: People think all kinds of things about dead girls, and they're almost never respectful things.

BRAD: The Black Dahlia is supposed to haunt the same hotel.

MIRIAM: Elizabeth Short.

BRAD: Who?

MIRIAM: The Black Dahlia. Her name was Elizabeth Short.

BRAD: I thought that was the girl who got kidnapped when I was in middle school.

MIRIAM: For someone with a lot of information about women who have been kidnapped or met tragic ends, you sure don't seem to know their names.

BRAD: Who can keep track of all the names?

MIRIAM: Right. Because it happens so often.

BRAD: Exactly.

(Pause.)

BRAD: You know, there was a case like that in this hotel. Not even that long ago.

MIRIAM: A kidnapping?

BRAD: Murder.

MIRIAM: Probably more than one.

BRAD: Oh, sure, but this one was pretty famous. It was all over the news.

MIRIAM: Murders often are.

BRAD: Yeah, yeah, it was awful. Let's see, her name was...Maria? Maria something, yeah. She was traveling alone for the first time ever. She'd been married for a while, terrible guy, got divorced and went on a solo trip to find herself or something. You know how women do.

MIRIAM: Mm-hmm.

BRAD: So, at first, the detectives thought it was the husband. That he'd tracked her down, they'd had a fight, he got jealous and killed her, that old song and dance. I mean, makes sense. Everyone thought it was him. I saw the guy in some interview, he looked guilty as hell. Shifty, you know? Like something wasn't quite right about him.

MIRIAM: Imagine that.

BRAD: Turned out he was just nervous people would find out he'd been embezzling with all that attention on him. And of course they did.

MIRIAM: Rotten luck for him.

BRAD: Right? So, you know what happened to Maria?

MIRIAM: I'm really not interested.

BRAD: You'd think since it's a hotel she'd have been killed in her room, right? Classic setup. Housekeeping coming in to clean, finding a murder scene. I mean, that's what you'd expect. But no. She was killed...in the elevator.

(Pause.)

MIRIAM: I get that I wounded your ego by turning down the drink, but you're really not making a case for yourself right now.

BRAD: I'm just making conversation.

MIRIAM: Really wish you wouldn't.

BRAD: Don't you want to know how it ends?

MIRIAM: No, but I bet you're going to tell me anyway.

BRAD: The elevator opened in the lobby and there she was, for everyone to see, right there on the floor. But the guy who killed her, they never caught him. There's video and everything. Of course, they didn't ever release the footage of her actually dying, but there's stuff where you actually see the guy get in with her. They never figured out who he was to her or where he went, let alone why he did it.

(Pause.)

BRAD: You know...now that I think about it...I'm pretty sure this is the anniversary of her dying.

MIRIAM: Oh, good, there's more of this story.

BRAD: Some ghost hunter show came here not that long ago. Tried to contact her spirit and all that. Lots of rumors about how she haunts the place.

MIRIAM: Ghosts don't scare me.

BRAD: So you do believe in them, then?

MIRIAM: Sure. But living people are way more dangerous, generally speaking.

BRAD: That ghost show got a lot of evidence. Lots of stuff on their recorder. Sounded like maybe she was trying to say a name or something. At one point they thought she said "revenge".

MIRIAM: (laughs)

BRAD: What's so funny?

MIRIAM: Kind of a cliché.

BRAD: Hey, if some strange man had killed you in an elevator, wouldn't you want revenge?

MIRIAM: (lets out a slow breath)

(We hear her put her phone away.)

MIRIAM: You got a few things wrong with that story, you know.

BRAD: What do you mean?

MIRIAM: I'm not surprised. And I guess I can't really even blame you for it. That's the thing about those sensational murder cases, right? 24-hour news full of experts and friends of the victim and true crime enthusiasts vlogging their theories. All those podcasts. Oh, and the ghost hunters, of course, as you mentioned. It makes it too easy to forget it was real. A real person who died, not just someone spelling their name out on a Ouija board to scare some guy holding an EMF detector. Those real people...they just become stories, don't they? And I used to like those stories! Those urban legends about a vengeful ghost...there was something so satisfying about them, wasn't there?

(The elevator suddenly creaks.)

BRAD: What was that?

MIRIAM: Even listening to you tell that horrible story about...what did you call her, the woman who died here?

BRAD: Uh...Maria?

MIRIAM: Right...even listening to that story, I admit it: a part of me really, really wanted there to be revenge.

(The elevator creaks again, loud and grinding. An alarming sound.)

BRAD: That doesn't sound right.

MIRIAM: Yeah. It doesn't, does it? I'm a peaceful person. I don't want people to get hurt. But revenge...is appealing.

BRAD: I meant the elevator doesn't sound right.

(Elevator creaks and thumps, as though dropping slightly.)

MIRIAM: Sure doesn't.

(Brad begins to panic, mashing buttons and pounding on the door.)

BRAD: Hey! Help! Get us out of here!

MIRIAM: Any minute now.

BRAD: What's wrong with you? Why are you so calm?

(Elevator groans, clearly dropping a bit more.)

MIRIAM: This isn't the worst thing to happen to me in an elevator.

BRAD: What?

MIRIAM: And besides, I'll be no worse for wear.

(Elevator creaks and thumps.)

BRAD: Do something!

MIRIAM: I probably could, if I tried really hard. But I think you're out of time. Welcome to the club.

BRAD: What the hell do you –

MIRIAM: Look on the bright side...you'll get to be a legend too.

BRAD: No. No, no, no, no –

MIRIAM: By the way? My name wasn't Maria. It was Miriam.

(Elevator drops suddenly.)

BRAD: (scream)

(The crash, and the ringing that follows as the dust settles.)

MIRIAM: (takes a breath) Next year should be interesting.

(There's a sound like a soft wind, and silence follows.)