

EINSTEIN IN AN ELEVATOR

A Thought Experiment

in an Operatta

by

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SYNOPSIS

EINSTEIN IN AN ELEVATOR is a short operetta about falling short. After finalizing their divorce, the couple decides to descend the elevator together. They listen to the music in their silence, which sounds more operatic than a typical elevator music ("Elevator Pitch"). It reminds them of their first date at an opera house. From another plane of existence, Albert Einstein narrates the equivalence principle which is helping them land on their feet.

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

Character	Nature	Identity
<u>INERTIA</u>	Ex-Spouse	<u>Adult</u>
The partner who was always on the move and wouldn't settle.		
<u>MASS</u>	Ex-Spouse	<u>Adult</u>
The partner who can hold down but always held up.		
<u>ELEVATOR</u>	Elevator Music	<u>Adult</u>
An opera singer in the elevator that Inertia and Mass take.		
<u>ALBERT EINSTEIN</u>	Albert Einstein	<u>Albert Einstein</u>
A physicist who is forever teaching.		

MUSICAL NUMBERS

<u>♫ #</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Characters</u>	<u>○Present/Unvocal</u>	<u>○Vocal/Unpresent</u>
1.	4	Elevator Pitch	INERTIA MASS ELEVATOR EINSTEIN		
2.	8	Equivalence	INERTIA MASS ELEVATOR EINSTEIN		

[Hallway of a Courthouse]

[Signs around show that nearby is where divorces are finalized.]

(INERTIA rushes by into the elevator, ready to push the button.)

(ELEVATOR makes a sound.)

(MASS takes a step into the hallway, revealing themself.)

(ELEVATOR hums a melody.)

(INERTIA changes their mind. They stop the elevator door from opening with their arms.)

INERTIA

MASS

Mass?

Inertia...?

MASS

Inertia... You often get ahead of yourself...

INERTIA

Mass. You always hold things up.

INERTIA

MASS

Mass. Going down.

Inertia... Going down?

(MASS inches into the elevator.)

[Elevator]

(INERTIA lets go of the door. They press the button.)

(MASS holds the same button.)

(INERTIA sneers at MASS.)

MASS

I still don't trust you to hold things down...

INERTIA

I still don't see you following through on anything.

INERTIA

You'll go down, Mass.

MASS

You're going down, Inertia...

1. ELEVATOR PITCH

(ELEVATOR sings down arpeggios.)

(INERTIA and MASS suddenly almost lose their balance.)

(EINSTEIN narrates. They are unseen.)

EINSTEIN

What you are observing is the equivalence principle. This follows after a healthily failed relationship. Indeed. Failed relationships can be healthy and a part of the forces of nature. Now, I don't have a PhD in love. I married my cousin, after all...

EINSTEIN (cont.)

Oh, and don't worry, about these two. I also don't have a background in engineering, but I happen to know that elevators are safe in your world than it is your head, and especially in my head. Inertia and Mass are fine.

(ELEVATOR performs an intense squillo.)

(INERTIA stumbles onto the floor.)

(MASS holds onto a railing.)

EINSTEIN

They are just overwhelmed by the opera, like I was.

[The violins play.]

EINSTEIN

I picked up the violin when I was just a toddler. I was engrossed in the work of Franz Shubert. His opera, *Alfonso und Estrella*, was the last I heard before leaving my homeland behind.

I left it all behind. My first life but not my first wife.

(ELEVATOR bellows for the rest of time.)

INERTIA

Just like our first date?

MASS

Just like our first date...

MASS

You took me to the opera house, even though you hated opera.

INERTIA

I don't remember at all what the show was.

[The light unveils EINSTEIN sunbathing on a deck chair.]

MASS

You couldn't get through even the first of four acts.

INERTIA

I was the one who was clapping at the end.

INERTIA

I can't believe I fell for you.
Do you remember our last date?

MASS

I can't believe I fell for you...
Do you remember our last date...?

MASS

You decided to take a chance at a five-hour opera.

INERTIA

I saw you clap for *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.

MASS

So much patience in you.

INERTIA

The openness within you.

MASS

The trials we took...

INERTIA

Til our wedding day.

INERTIA

What happened?
How'd we fall so short?

MASS

What happened...
How we fell so short...

EINSTEIN

These two wouldn't know falling, if the elevator they were in were falling. Our equivalence principle...

*(EINSTEIN pulls out an overfilled kettle with a horizontal hole.
The kettle is spilling tea.)*

Tea is pouring out of the kettle because gravity pulls on the tea. But when you drop the kettle, the tea will stop spilling.

*(EINSTEIN drops the kettle, and the kettle momentarily stops
spilling tea before hitting the ground.)*

That's a cleaner reason than my real thought experiment. My thoughts were truly blacker than the kettle. *It was a man-falling-off-the-rooftops dark.*

This elevator play is not about my thoughts but theirs. And this is the first time since their last date that they were equals.

[End of "Elevator Pitch."]

2. EQUIVALENCE

(MASS levels with INERTIA.)

EINSTEIN

These two have holes in them. And when they're still together for so long, life pulls the flaws and pain out of them.

But when these two actually fall together, do their holes close.

(ELEVATOR performs a final squillo.)

[End of “Equivalence.”]

[The elevator dings and opens.]

[Blackout.]