

I Dream Before I Take the Stand

by Arlene Hutton

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Cast: SHE: a petite woman
HE: a man, probably a lawyer, probably the defense attorney

Set: A chair

Time: Right now

Casting Note: The man is age 25-60, the woman 20-50, both of any race. The woman should be petite in height or very slim if taller, but the specific hair color lines may be changed with the author's permission.

I Dream Before I Take the Stand received development at Ensemble Studio Theatre and at Alice's Fourth Floor in New York City. It premiered in August, 1995, at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, presented by The Journey Company, directed by Judith Royer and performed by Robert Kilbridge and Beth Lincks. With the same cast and director the play was produced by The Journey Company at Piccolo Spoloto in 1997 and at the first New York International Fringe Festival in August, 1997.

I Dream Before I Take the Stand

(Lights up on a petite woman sitting in a chair. It is possible that the lights begin the play full and soft, narrowing very slowly throughout, so that by the end of the play only a narrow spot is focused on the woman, like an interrogation room. The man, a lawyer, walks around her throughout, at first in the full circle of light, later appearing in and out of the focused light. Perhaps by the end of the play, the light has narrowed on the woman, and the man is barely seen. There are many ways to present this play. But the pauses are a part of the dialogue.)

SHE: I was walking through the park.

HE: Why were you in the park?

SHE: I was on my way to work.

HE: Do you have to walk through the park to get to work?

SHE: No.

HE: Do you always walk through the park to work?

SHE: No.

HE: Why did you walk through the park that day?

SHE: It was a beautiful day. I like to walk to work through the park when the weather's good.

(Pause.)

HE: Were you in a hurry?

SHE: I was on my way to work.

HE: Were you late?

SHE: No, I would have been on time.

HE: Were you strolling or walking fast?

SHE: I always walk fairly quickly.

HE: Why? The park is not safe?

SHE: I guess not.

HE: Yet you walk through it to get to work.

SHE: There are lots of people around.

HE: But you walk quickly through the park.

SHE: Yes.

(Pause.)

HE: How do you walk?

SHE: Which way?

HE: Do you swing your arms?

SHE: I don't know.

HE: Were you carrying anything?

SHE: Just my purse.

HE: So your arms were free to swing along as you walked.

SHE: Maybe.

HE: Or maybe you walk with them folded.

SHE: I don't know what you mean.

HE: Perhaps you fold your arms. *(He demonstrates)*

SHE: Maybe.

HE: So sometimes you swing your arms and sometimes you fold them.

SHE: I guess.

HE: What else would you do with them?

SHE: I guess you're right.

(Pause.)

HE: So you were walking through the park that day on your way to work.

SHE: Yes. I already said that.

(Pause.)

HE: What were you wearing?

SHE: A skirt and a top.

HE: What color was the skirt?

SHE: It was a print.

HE: What color?

SHE: Black and red.

HE: And the top?

SHE: What?

HE: What color was the top?

SHE: Black.

HE: Just black?

SHE: It had a little red flower on it.

HE: The fabric?

SHE: No. A decoration.

HE: Where?

SHE: In the center of the neckline.

HE: A rose.

SHE: I guess. It was tiny.

HE: It was in the fabric?

SHE: No. It was a small ribbon.

HE: Like the little flowers on lingerie.

SHE: Like that.

HE: How sweet. (*A pause.*) Were you wearing jewelry?

SHE: No. Just a watch.

HE: An expensive watch?

SHE: No.

HE: An expensive looking watch?

SHE: No. Just a Timex.

HE: So that you could hurry through the park to be at work on time.

SHE: Of course.

HE: No other jewelry?

SHE: No.

HE: Why not?

SHE: I don't wear jewelry in the park.

HE: Why not?

SHE: I don't want to attract attention.

HE: You don't want to get mugged.

SHE: Right.

(Pause.)

HE: Your hair is up today. Were you wearing it that way in the park?

SHE: No. I was wearing it down.

HE: Why?

SHE: It probably wasn't quite dry.

HE: You go out with wet hair? Why?

SHE: In nice weather.

HE: Why?

SHE: It feels good.

HE: And you color your hair.

SHE: Yes.

HE: And why is that?

SHE: I like it.

HE: Why? What is your natural color?

SHE: Like this when I was in college.

HE: But now?

SHE: I don't know.

HE: You don't know what color your hair is?

SHE: It's been a while—

HE: What color do you think it is?

SHE: I imagine it's sort of a dirty blonde with a little gray.
[note: “dirty blonde” can be “mousy brown,” depending on the hair color of the actress. “With a little gray” can be omitted]

HE: But you don't really know.

SHE: Not really.

HE: *(Optional pause.)* Do you think you are more attractive with colored hair?

SHE: I don't know.

HE: Then why do you color it?

SHE: I guess so.

HE: What?

SHE: I guess I think I'm—

HE: So you color your hair to be more attractive.

SHE: I guess.

HE: But your fingernails are not painted.

SHE: No.

HE: Do you sometimes paint your fingernails?

SHE: Sometimes I wear nail polish.

HE: Were your fingernails painted that day?

SHE: I think so.

HE: What nail color did you use?

SHE: A pink polish.

HE: Not red.

SHE: No. Just pink.

HE: Why?

SHE: To match my make-up.

HE: You were wearing make-up?

SHE: Yes.

HE: Do you always wear make-up to the park?

SHE: No.

HE: They why were you wearing it that day?

SHE: I was on my way to work.

HE: What sort of make-up were you wearing?

SHE: What brand?

HE: Which items of make-up had you put on? Lipstick?

SHE: Yes.

HE: What color?

SHE: The actual name?

HE: What color would you call the lipstick you wore?

SHE: A sort of peach, maybe, with a darker—

HE: You were wearing two colors on your lips?

SHE: Well, yes.

HE: How does one do that?

SHE: It's a lip liner with a brush and then a tube lipstick.

HE: You outline your lips before you put on your lipstick.

SHE: Yes. It's—

HE: You add definition to your lips.

SHE: Sort of.

HE: To emphasize them. You emphasize your lips.

SHE: It's just the way you put on make-up.

(Possibly a pause.)

HE: What other make-up were you wearing?

SHE: A little powder.

HE: Why?

SHE: So my nose wouldn't be shiny.

HE: And why would it?

SHE: It was a fairly warm day.

HE: You might have perspired a little.

SHE: Maybe.

HE: And was there color on your cheeks?

SHE: Yes. I use a little blush.

HE: Color on the eyes?

SHE: Eyeliner. Maybe a little eye shadow.

HE: Mascara.

SHE: No.

HE: Are you sure?

SHE: Yes. I don't use mascara.

HE: Why not?

SHE: It bothers my contact lenses.

HE: Were you wearing contact lenses in the park?

SHE: Yes.

HE: You weren't wearing glasses?

SHE: No.

HE: But you are wearing glasses now.

SHE: Sometimes I wear contact lenses.

HE: You were wearing contact lenses in the park.

SHE: I already said that.

HE: Your hair was down and you were wearing make-up and contact lenses.

SHE: I already said that.

HE: Your hair was down and you were wearing make-up and contact lenses.

SHE: Yes.

(Pause.)

HE: Were you wearing perfume?

SHE: Cologne.

HE: Do you always wear perfume?

SHE: Cologne. I was wearing cologne.

HE: Do you always wear cologne?

SHE: Usually.

HE: In the park?

SHE: To work.

HE: And it was a warm day.

SHE: Yes. But what does that—

HE: You were walking through the park on your way to work dressed in your skirt and top. Your hair was down and you were wearing make-up and perfume.

SHE: Cologne.

(A long pause. She has won this round, and he must regroup.)

HE: You were walking through the park.

SHE: Yes.

HE: You passed a man sitting on a bench.

SHE: *(After a slight pause.)* There were lots of people sitting on benches.

HE: You passed many people.

SHE: Yes.

HE: The park was crowded.

SHE: No.

HE: The park was not empty.

SHE: No. But there were a lot of people.

HE: Did you see anyone you knew?

SHE: No.

HE: No neighbors or friends or familiar faces?

SHE: No.

HE: You walked past the people sitting on benches.

SHE: Yes.

HE: There was a man sitting on a bench by himself.

SHE: I didn't notice he was alone.

HE: He spoke to you.

SHE: Yes.

HE: You spoke to him.

SHE: No.

HE: He spoke to you.

SHE: Yes.

HE: What did he say?

SHE: He just said hello.

HE: And what did you do?

SHE: I nodded to him and kept on walking.

HE: Did you know him?

SHE: No.

HE: Had you ever seen him before?

SHE: No.

HE: He was a stranger.

SHE: Yes.

HE: Yet you nodded at him. Did you smile as you nodded?

SHE: Yes.

HE: Why?

SHE: It was a beautiful day. I was just passing by and he said hello.

HE: Do you always acknowledge comments from strangers on the street?

SHE: Not always.

HE: Then why did you acknowledge this man?

SHE: It was such a nice day. And I don't like to be rude.

HE: So this stranger said hello and you smiled and nodded.

SHE: That's right.

HE: Did you speak to other people sitting on the benches?

SHE: No.

HE: Did you speak to anyone else in the park?

SHE: No.

HE: Why not?

SHE: No one else spoke to me.

HE: But when a strange man said hello you smiled and nodded at him.

SHE: Yes. There were lots of people—

HE: Did you stop to smile and nod?

SHE: What?

HE: Did you stop still in front of the man to smile at him?

SHE: No. I kept walking.

HE: Why didn't you stop?

SHE: I didn't think about it. It was just a casual hello. I just kept walking. It was nothing.

HE: Not really. *(Pause.)* What were you wearing?

SHE: What?

HE: What were you wearing?

SHE: I told you.

HE: You have to answer. What were you wearing?

SHE: A skirt and a top.

HE: To go to work?

SHE: I had a jacket in the office.

HE: What kind of skirt?

SHE: A printed one.

HE: A red and black print.

SHE: Yes.

HE: Was it long or short?

SHE: What?

HE: The skirt. Was it below your knees?

SHE: No.

HE: It came above your knees.

SHE: Yes.

HE: It was tight. It clung to your body?

SHE: No. It was gathered. A full skirt.

HE: So it might have moved when you walked.

SHE: I don't know.

HE: What was the fabric?

SHE: Chiffon.

HE: Chiffon is a sheer fabric.

SHE: It was lined.

HE: What was the lining?

SHE: The lining was chiffon, too.

HE: So you were wearing a see-through mini skirt.

SHE: No.

HE: Describe the blouse.

SHE: What?

HE: You were wearing a top.

SHE: Yes. A T-shirt.

HE: A knit top.

SHE: Yes.

HE: Did it have sleeves?

SHE: No. It was sleeveless.

HE: A tank top. It was tight.

SHE: No.

HE: It fitted closely on your body. What color was it?

SHE: I already told you.

HE: What color was it?

SHE: (*An outburst.*) Black.

HE: With a little red flower. (*Possibly a pause.*) Were you wearing underwear?

SHE: (*Surprised at this question.*) Yes.

HE: Were you wearing a slip?

SHE: No.

HE: Why not?

SHE: It was warm out. And the skirt was lined.

HE: Were you wearing panty hose?

SHE: No.

HE: Your legs were bare.

SHE: Yes.

HE: No socks?

SHE: I told you. I was wearing sandals.

HE: For the office?

SHE: I keep stockings and pumps in my desk.

HE: Along with a jacket.

SHE: Yes.

HE: You walk through the park half naked and cover up for the office.

SHE: *(After a pause.)* It's air-conditioned.

HE: What?

SHE: The office. It's air-conditioned. It gets cold.

HE: But the park was hot.

SHE: Yes.

HE: So you don't wear much clothing. Were your legs shaved?

SHE: Yes.

HE: Why do you shave your legs?

SHE: I just do.

HE: It looks better.

SHE: Yes.

HE: So you weren't wearing pantyhose.

SHE: I already said that.

HE: No stockings at all.

SHE: I was wearing sandals.

HE: Were you wearing a bra?

SHE: What?

HE: Were you wearing a bra?

SHE: Yes.

HE: What size?

SHE: Thirty-four.

HE: Thirty-four what?

SHE: Just thirty-four.

HE: What cup size are you?

SHE: Um, uh, B or C.

HE: You don't know?

SHE: It depends on the bra. What brand.

HE: What was the cup size of the bra you had on that day?

SHE: It didn't have a cup size. It was just a 34.

HE: Why didn't it have a cup size? Don't most bras have a cup size?

SHE: It wasn't sized that way. It didn't have an underwire.

HE: So it was an elastic sort of bra.

SHE: I don't know. Maybe.

(A slight pause.)

HE: How tall are you?

SHE: Five foot three.

HE: You are considered a petite woman, then.

SHE: I guess so.

HE: But thirty-four B or C is a fairly large bra size for a small woman.

SHE: It's average.

HE: Not for a petite woman. You wouldn't say your breasts were small.

SHE: My....

HE: Your breasts. They are not small breasts.

SHE: I don't know.

HE: You don't know you have large breasts?

SHE: They're average.

HE: Do you always wear a bra?

SHE: When?

HE: When you walk through the park, do you always wear a bra?

SHE: Yes.

HE: Why?

SHE: I feel more comfortable.

HE: Because you have large breasts.

SHE: *(No answer.)*

HE: You would not say that you have small breasts.

SHE: No...

HE: You have a large bust. But you were wearing a tank top.

SHE: It was hot.

HE: You were wearing a tight T-shirt. How wide were the straps on your tank top?

SHE: I don't know.

HE: Wide enough to cover the bra straps?

SHE: Well, yes.

HE: You were carrying a purse.

SHE: Yes.

HE: What kind?

SHE: A small leather one.

HE: You were carrying it in your hand.

SHE: No.

HE: It had a strap.

SHE: Yes.

HE: How were you carrying your purse?

SHE: On my shoulder. The strap was on my shoulder.

HE: Could it cause your tank top strap to shift?

SHE: What?

HE: The strap on your tank top. Could your purse strap have caused it to shift?

SHE: I guess.

HE: Revealing your bra strap.

SHE: Maybe.

HE: So your bra straps could have been showing as you walked through the park.

SHE: I don't know.

(Pause.)

HE: What color was your underwear?

SHE: What does it matter?

HE: What color was your underwear?

SHE: *(Overlapping.)* Black.

HE: The bra or the panties?

SHE: Both.

HE: They matched?

SHE: Yes.

HE: Did they have lace?

SHE: Yes.

HE: You were wearing a black lacy bra and panties?

SHE: That's right.

HE: Why not white or beige?

SHE: To match the tank top and skirt.

HE: Why? Did you expect anyone to see your underwear that day?

SHE: What?

HE: *(He doesn't answer.)*

SHE: No.

HE: Did you have a date with a boyfriend later?

SHE: No.

HE: Then why did it have to match?

SHE: What?

HE: The underwear. The bra and panties

SHE: In case it... in case the tank strap...

HE: So you expected the bra strap to be seen.

SHE: Not necessarily.

HE: But you thought it might.

SHE: I didn't really think about it. It's just what I put on that morning.

HE: Black lacy underwear is considered sexy.

SHE: I guess.

HE: It is sexier than white or beige.

SHE: I guess so.

HE: Black is considered a sexy color. So is red.

SHE: I don't know.

HE: Your skirt was black and red. Your top was black with a little red ribbon flower on it. Your bra and panties were black.

SHE: That's right.

HE: So why were you wearing sexy underwear if no one was to see it?

SHE: I just like it.

HE: Why?

SHE: It makes me feel...

HE: Sexier.

SHE: Prettier.

HE: More sensual.

SHE: More feminine.

HE: You walked through the park wearing sexy underwear and revealing clothes and you smiled and nodded at a man you did not know.

SHE: No.

HE: No?

SHE: Not like that.

HE: You walked through the park.

SHE: Yes.

HE: You were wearing black lacy underwear.

SHE: Yes.

HE: You were wearing a tight tank top and a see-through skirt.

HE: I...

HE: You nodded at a strange man.

SHE: Okay.

HE: You smiled at him.

SHE: Okay.

HE: Your bra strap had slipped, and you felt sexy.

SHE: No.

HE: It was a hot day.

SHE: Yes.

HE: Your legs were bare. Your thighs were warm.

SHE: No.

HE: The weather was warm.

SHE: Yes.

HE: You were walking quickly.

SHE: Yes.

HE: You worked up a sweat.

SHE: I don't know.

HE: It is likely you were perspiring.

SHE: I guess.

HE: Your clothes were clinging to you.

SHE: No.

HE: You were moist with sweat and the chiffon lining of your skirt was clinging to your legs as you walked. Your knit top was damp and clung closely to your body.

SHE: That's not right.

HE: It was a hot day. You were walking quickly. You were perspiring.

SHE: *(No answer.)*

HE: Your clothes were warm and sticky. The shape of your body was revealed.

Have your breasts been artificially enlarged?

SHE: No.

HE: Or reduced?

SHE: No.

HE: They have not been altered in any way.

SHE: No.

HE: So your breasts are not, shall we say, unnaturally firm.

SHE: I guess not.

HE: And your bra had no underwire.

SHE: We've been through that.

HE: So your breasts had little support.

SHE: I was wearing a bra.

HE: You were walking quickly.

SHE: Yes.

HE: Your breasts were bouncing.

SHE: I don't know.

HE: Your strap might have slipped. Your breasts had no support.

SHE: I was wearing a bra.

HE: You were swinging your arms.

SHE: You said that.

HE: You were either swinging your arms or your arms were folded holding up your breasts.

SHE: I don't know.

HE: Tank tops are low cut.

SHE: It wasn't really—

HE: You folded your arms under your breasts to show your cleavage.

SHE: No.

HE: Might you have folded your arms?

SHE: Not to—

HE: Is it possible you folded your arms?

SHE: Maybe.

HE: Or you were swinging your arms?

SHE: No.

HE: You were walking quickly.

SHE: Yes. To—

HE: Then you were swinging your arms.

SHE: I don't know.

HE: You were swaying your hips.

SHE: No.

HE: You were swinging your arms and your breasts were bouncing.

SHE: No.

HE: Your large breasts were bouncing and your strap was showing.

SHE: No.

HE: If you were walking at a fast pace your breasts would bounce and your hips sway.

SHE: I didn't think about it.

HE: That's right.

(Pause.)

HE: What size panties?

SHE: What?

HE: What size were your panties?

SHE: Medium, I guess.

HE: You don't know?

SHE: I don't remember.

HE: What size panties do you usually buy?

SHE: Medium or small. It depends.

HE: On what?

SHE: On what's on sale, the style, I don't know.

HE: What style?

SHE: I don't know what you mean.

HE: What style were those panties? Bikini panties?

SHE: That's right.

HE: Why?

SHE: Why what?

HE: Why were you wearing bikini panties?

SHE: They matched the bra.

HE: Wouldn't a looser fitting panty be more comfortable?

SHE: Not really.

HE: Bikini panties allow your thighs to touch each other.

SHE: Stop it.

HE: It was a very hot day. You walked quickly through the park wearing sexy clothes with your breasts bouncing and your thighs damp and you smiled and nodded at a stranger.

SHE: That's not it.

HE: You were walking through the park.

SHE: Yes.

HE: It was a hot day.

SHE: Yes.

HE: You smiled at stranger. And he followed you.

SHE: I didn't know.

HE: What?

SHE: I didn't know that he had followed me.

HE: When did you notice that he followed you?

SHE: When he grabbed me.

HE: Not before?

SHE: He grabbed me from behind. I didn't see him.

HE: You didn't turn when you heard someone behind you?

SHE: There was loud music. I didn't hear anything.

HE: The music was so loud you didn't hear someone behind you?

SHE: There was a machine...

HE: A lawnmower?

SHE: Louder. An edger. There was loud music and loud noise. I didn't hear him.

HE: You went into the park.

SHE: To walk to work.

HE: You were wearing suggestive clothing.

SHE: No.

HE: You signaled to a man.

SHE: No.

HE: You enticed him.

SHE: No.

HE: You led him on.

SHE: No.

HE: You acknowledged him.

SHE: *(No answer.)*

HE: You smiled at him.

SHE: Yes.

(The lights are beginning to dim, leaving an ever-brightening single spot focused in the woman's eyes, like an interrogation room. Perhaps the man fades into the background during the rest of the play. Or maybe not.)

HE: *(He verbally rapes her.)* You left your glasses off. Your dyed hair was bobbing in the breeze. You had painted nails and wore rouge. Your body was scented. You were wearing a revealing outfit, you were feeling sexy in your dainty black lacy undies and your tight shirt and your sheer skirt, and you were shaking your breasts and rolling your hips at this man.

SHE: *(Quite possibly a scream.)* No!

(A very long pause.)

HE: Start at the beginning.

SHE: What?

HE: Start at the beginning.

SHE: I was walking through the park.

HE: And?

SHE: It was a nice day. *(Pause.)* It was a nice day.

(Blackout. End of play.)