

LATENT TALENTS

by

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Cast:

Esmerelda..... Female, 30s-40s. A fortune teller

Dale Christensen Male, 30s-40s. A CIA Agent

Time:

The present.

Place:

A fortune teller's table adjacent to Jackson Square in New Orleans.

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(Lights up on a street at midnight. Esmeralda is sitting alone at a fortune teller's table; there is an empty chair across from her)

ESMERALDA
(To offstage right)

And how about you? You look like a seeker. Let me help you.

DALE
(Enters from right)

Are you talking to me?

ESMERALDA
Yes, sir. Let me do a reading for you.

DALE
I don't know.

ESMERALDA
I can help you find what you're looking for.

DALE
How much is it?

ESMERALDA
Only twenty dollars.

DALE
Hmmm.

ESMERALDA
What's your name?

DALE
Shouldn't you tell me?

ESMERALDA
Let me concentrate...Does it start with a..."D"?

DALE
Very good. Yes, it's Dale. All right...
(Sits .Puts twenty dollars on table)
And you're "The Amazing Esmeralda?"

ESMERALDA

Just Esmeralda will be fine. Give me your hand.

(Dale puts his hand in Esmeralda's)

Very interesting.

DALE

What?

ESMERALDA

(Studying Dale's palm)

You are looking for someone.

DALE

Yes.

ESMERALDA

Someone close to you. A woman.

DALE

Yes. And she was close to me.

ESMERALDA

You think about her a lot.

DALE

I have. I haven't seen her in a long time.

ESMERALDA

Do you dream about her?

DALE

Well I...actually, it's funny you should mention that. I did have a dream, recently.

ESMERALDA

About her.

DALE

No. It was about...an upside-down hippopotamus.

ESMERALDA

Really?

DALE

Yes. An upside-down hippopotamus.

ESMERALDA

Interesting. Is she fat? This woman you're looking for.

DALE

No. Which is why a dream about an upside-down hippopotamus would be so confusing.

ESMERALDA

I see. You know, I once had a dream like that.

DALE

You don't say.

ESMERALDA

I suspect it was beamed into my head by the FBI.

DALE

Ah.

ESMERALDA

Yes. My psychic abilities were awakened by experiments that the FBI performed on me. But, you don't want to hear all that.

DALE

Actually—

ESMERALDA

I mean, it's your twenty dollars. I'm supposed to tell you about your life, not about mine.

DALE

Sure. The woman I'm looking for—

ESMERALDA

Say no more! Let the spirits, and the tricholorizine, reveal all.

DALE

Tricholorizine?

ESMERALDA

That's one of the drugs the FBI uses.

DALE

I've never heard of that before.

ESMERALDA

It's top secret.

DALE

About my woman friend—

ESMERALDA

You came to New Orleans to look for her.

DALE

Yes.

ESMERALDA

I think she's close by.

DALE

I had another dream. It was about a purple feline.

ESMERALDA

Interesting. Any others?

DALE

A silky candelabra.

ESMERALDA

That's sort of odd.

DALE

None of this is triggering anything for you?

ESMERALDA

No.

DALE

Oh. I should go.

ESMERALDA

But I haven't finished your reading!

DALE

This just isn't working for me.

ESMERALDA

It's the FBI thing. I freaked you out.

DALE

No, not at all.

ESMERALDA

Don't worry. They are listening in right now, but they don't care about you.

DALE

They don't?

ESMERALDA

No. It's just me. They've been watching me for years.

DALE

I doubt that.

ESMERALDA

It's true! They have microphones everywhere!

DALE

I've upset you.

ESMERALDA

This woman...you worked with her. She—

DALE

Esmeralda...

ESMERALDA

No, you wanted her to do something...

DALE

I should go.

ESMERALDA

Please don't! She...

DALE

Yes?

ESMERALDA

She...she couldn't do what you needed her to do. So she ran away.

DALE

Yes.

ESMERALDA

She ran away here. Oh my God.

DALE

What?

ESMERALDA

You're one of them. You're with the FBI!

DALE

No, I'm not.

ESMERALDA

Yes, yes you are! You've been watching me. I've seen you before. I know it.

DALE

Esmeralda, I'm not with the FBI. Damn, this was a mistake.

ESMERALDA

Black Maple!

DALE

What?!

ESMERALDA

Black Maple! That's what I know you from. But what is it?

DALE

Never say that project name out loud.

ESMERALDA

We worked together. On—

DALE

Do not say it!

ESMERALDA

But we...

DALE

Yes. On that project, and many others.

ESMERALDA

So you are with the FBI.

DALE

No.

(Takes ID out of wallet and shows it to Esmeralda)

The Central Intelligence Agency.

ESMERALDA

The FBI and CIA working together? That's illegal.

DALE

The FBI isn't involved.

ESMERALDA

But the microphones...

DALE

There are no microphones.

ESMERALDA

But...you haven't been watching me? The FBI has.

DALE

We've been looking for you. For three years.

ESMERALDA

You should have just asked the FBI.

DALE

Esmeralda. The FBI doesn't know about this. The project was far too secret to let them in on it.

ESMERALDA

The project?

DALE

It was an important project. Important projects involve intense training for the agents involved. And sometimes...

ESMERALDA

It was me, wasn't it?

DALE

And sometimes agents break. I'm sorry, Jessica.

ESMERALDA

Who?

DALE

That's your real time. Don't you remember? Jessica. Jessica Frances Christensen.

ESMERALDA

No.

DALE

I'm Dale Christensen. Your husband.

ESMERALDA

Those phrases you were saying. "Upside-down hippopotamus". That's an implanted phrase to get me to comply with your commands.

DALE

No, it...

ESMERALDA

I knew it. You are trying to control me!

DALE

That was the name of our cat.

ESMERALDA

It was a code phrase!

DALE

He was fat and liked to lie on his back, so...well, we called him Hippo for short.

ESMERALDA

(Gets up)

I don't know who you really are, but I'm not going to let you control me.

DALE

Jessica, please.

ESMERALDA

Get away from me!

DALE

All right! All right. Just calm down. I'm not going to hurt you.

ESMERALDA

Call them off.

DALE

Who?

ESMERALDA

The ones who are watching me. The ones from the FBI or CIA or whatever.

But Jessica...

DALE

Call them off!

ESMERALDA

All right. Okay.

DALE

Back off, guys. We're still talking.

(Talks into wrist)

ESMERALDA

Tell them to put their guns down.

DALE

(Into wrist)

Guys, put your guns down.

ESMERALDA

Fine. Okay.

DALE

Jessica—

ESMERALDA

I'm leaving.

DALE

But Jessica!

ESMERALDA

I am not Jessica! I am Esmeralda! The Amazing Esmeralda!

DALE

Jessica...

ESMERALDA

Don't try to follow me. I have my talents. I can sense you before you come.

DALE

Esmeralda! Please! We...I've been looking for you for three years!

ESMERALDA

I know.

DALE
Please let us help you.

ESMERALDA
Help me?

DALE
Please, Jessica.

ESMERALDA
You can help me?

DALE
Just come with me. Everything will be all right.

ESMERALDA
Everything will be...

DALE
Everyone misses you.

ESMERALDA
I...

DALE
Please come home.

ESMERALDA
No! No! Stay away from me
(Esmeralda runs off stage left)

DALE
Jessica! Jessica! Damn.
(Into wrist)
Sniper One! She's heading towards your position. Tranquilizer her! Now!
(Pause)
You put your gun down? Why...well pick it up and...
(Pause)
She's gone?
(Not into wrist)
Damn.
(Runs off stage left. Lights down.)

THE END