

MASTERMIND

A Play in One Act

by

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MASTERMIND

Characters:

J.D. - 30. An amnesiac, a genius, and all around good guy.

MASTERMIND - A masked criminal/terrorist. (Doubled by J.D.)

LIZ LASSITER - Late 20s, journalist and smart-ass.

Time:

December. Next year.

Place:

A major metropolitan city. J.D and Liz's apartment; a bank lobby; City Council chambers; an abandoned warehouse.

The only required set pieces are a chair, a desk, a sofa and a Christmas tree (or items to indicate the X-mas season)

(A single blue spot abruptly illuminates MASTERMIND. A medium-build man in black that covers all, long sleeves, gloves and with a featureless face mask or a stylized black hood of some sort over his face. He sits at a plain rectangular table, like a desk. We're watching him on television)

MASTERMIND

I am Mastermind and I interrupt programming for this recorded special bulletin. You're going to die. Maybe. Somewhere in this city is bomb. Not huge, but, you know, good-sized. It should take out a block or nine. It's constructed of cyclonite nitroamine and has a shielded electronic trigger of my own design. It's also on a three-hundred-sixty-five day timer that I reset frequently, though evidently something has prevented that for, oh, about three-hundred-sixty four days and twenty-three hours and fifteen minutes. Give or take. Well, mostly take. The reason for this recorded broadcast is that I have apparently been in police custody and have not been able to effect a release, legal or otherwise, for one year as of today. That or I'm dead. The device can only be deactivated by me personally. It has finger print recognition and a one-hundred-twenty-eight digit PIN. And it's going off in an hour. I'll need about a minute and half just to enter the PIN. Three would be better, just in case I fat-finger it. I may be a supergenius, but the hand-eye is...

(trails off on that one)

So, if in police custody, I suggest that I be released immediately or there will be fatalities. Somewhere. If I'm dead, well, at least I won't be alone. Rather than return you to your regularly scheduled programming, I'm leaving you with a repeating loop of a delightful and tone deaf eight-year-old girl singing "It's A Small World After All."

(Spot just as abruptly goes dark. Several beats of maniacal laughter, the coughing. Then quiet.)

LIZ

J.D.?

(Lights up, as if "switched" on. J.D., casual in black, sleeves pushed up, He sits to one side of the table. There's a Christmas tree upstage left and a sofa upstage right. A city apartment. LIZ's entering from stage left.)

LIZ

We have to get out. Now. Go pack. We need to-- Are you sitting in the dark?

J.D.
No.

LIZ
Don't get all semantic on me.

J.D.
Yes, Liz. I am sitting in the dark.

LIZ
What the hell--

J.D.
--An unusually bright variety of dark. I think it's defective. Are you seeing this--

LIZ
Stop.

(J.D. stops. LIZ gets back on topic.)

LIZ
We have to go.

(LIZ exits stage right)

LIZ (OFF)
You saw it. Did you see it?

J.D.
I saw it.

LIZ (OFF)
It came on in the newsroom. Why didn't you answer the phone?

J.D.
I wasn't--

LIZ (OFF)
He said forty-five, right. We've still got twenty-something minutes.

J.D.
We can't get out of the city in twenty-something minutes. Twenty-nine; maybe. Twenty-five-ish; possibly maybe. Twenty-one; really doubt it.

LIZ (OFF)
We can almost be out of the city in twenty-one minutes. Even with the panic traffic.

(LIZ reenters, stage right, with a duffel, stuffed to overflowing with random clothes.)

J.D.

Yeah, but almost out of the city is, I'm fair sure, still in the city. If you have a map handy I may be able to confirm it.

(LIZ drops the duffel and kneels in front of J.D.)

LIZ

We don't have to be out of the city, we just have to be out of this part of the city.

J.D.

(mocking)

What? Do you think Mastermind is specifically targeting you or something.

(realizing; serious)

You don't, do you?

LIZ

No, but we live in the city center. Where would you put a bomb? Here. Right?

J.D.

I wouldn't put a bomb.

LIZ

Dork. If you were Mastermind, where?

J.D.

I'd do the world a favor and put it in my trousers.

LIZ

J.D.!

J.D.

(relenting; she's probably right)

Closer to the center of the city would do more damage to property and there would be a greater population density, if lethality's going to be an issue...

LIZ

See? So almost out of the city is good enough. C'mon.

J.D.

There would also be disruption of city service, compounding the disaster response. Police reaction being inhibited, there would be a rash of looting in districts marginally affected by the blast. It's actually an ingenious cascade of criminal strategy that would almost be cool if it weren't--

LIZ

Okay. Point made. Sharp pointy point.

J.D.

That's what I'd do. If I were Mastermind.

LIZ

Right. So can we get out now?

J.D.

I don't think I can.

LIZ

Why the hell not?

J.D.

I think I'm Mastermind.

LIZ

Funny. Like a one-eyed-kitten-with-cancer funny.

J.D.

I think I was Mastermind.

(LIZ doesn't know how to react, so she just drops the duffel and sits at the table with him. After a moment, she remembers to take his hand.)

LIZ

I thought we agreed, we weren't going to speculate about who you were before you woke up in the hospital. The man I fell in love with is much too good a man to have ever been that bad of one.

J.D.

The man you fell in love with didn't exist until last New Year's. Before that, I could have been anybody.

LIZ

No. No, you couldn't. Besides, I covered Mastermind, if you were that demented criminal, terrorist and weapons-grade asshole, I think I'd know it.

J.D.

It all fits. Mastermind's been off the radar for a year, the amnesia, you found me in that warehouse about a year ago. Bad guys use abandoned warehouses for the evil lairs. It's a fact.

(LIZ's getting a little impatient now. Gets up from the table.)

LIZ

So do homeless people, not for evil, but for, you know, homes. We've been through this, like, a google of times. You were probably a down-on-his-luck--

J.D.

--Now who's speculating?

LIZ

Right. Less speculating, more fleeing.

(LIZ puts the duffel on the table.)

J.D.

Besides, how many clean-shaven homeless guys do you find that can speak ten languages, do calculus in his head and---

LIZ

--Yeah, I know it's weird.

(as she hurriedly tries to stuff
the overflow inside her duffel)

Sometimes Doctors in med school cram their brains with so much stuff that it makes them situationally stupid. The medical knowledge edges out things like -- I don't know -- how to make a sammich. Well, not that, but you know. Clearly your brain was so full of awesome that it pushed out everything else leaving you fifty-something cards short of a deck.

J.D.

I think the expression is just a few cards short of a--

LIZ

I know. That's you before me. The jokers. Kidding. C'mon. We gotta roll.

(LIZ tugs J.D.'s arm, but he stays.)

J.D.

You might be right. That's why the therapies didn't work. They were trying to get the regular cards. The two of hearts, the ace of diamonds, king of clubs, whatever, but all that was there are two cards you can't play any games with.

LIZ

You're getting a lot of mileage out of that card analogy, ain't ya? Getting mileage in my car though is much more advisable. Now, make legs go.

J.D.

The doctors were trying to draw out memories of a normal life. No pun intended. With the...draw...I just...dropping the analogy now.

(LIZ drops the duffel by the door.)

LIZ

Normal?

J.D.

Well, qualifying the memories of a criminally insane madman as not normal. That's not what they were digging for.

LIZ

Well, good. Cuz' even if you were, I don't really see trying to get those memories back as fitting the hippocratic oath.

J.D.

The bit about only prescribing stuff from companies that paid for your Maui golf vacation?

LIZ

The part that goes "First, do no harm." I'd say bringing back that masked douchenozzle would be-- what's the word -- harmful?

J.D.

Remembering where that bomb is and how to deactivate wouldn't be a good thing?

(LIZ goes behind him, and hugs him, speaking right in his ear.)

LIZ

J.D.? Sweetie? The therapies were going nowhere and no one came forward to identify you. It was your decision to accept the present and forget the past. All right? Leave the past forgotten. This is who you are now. You like it. I like it. I love it.

(LIZ sits on the edge of the table, in front of J.D.)

LIZ

And supposing for a minute, that we don't have for things like supposing, but supposing that a...a lifetime ago you were Mastermind, you've been more than making up for it. Using that mighty noggin of yours to-- here, this. What's this?

J.D.

An idea for an electrical buffer storage device. It would eliminate brownouts and blackouts and reduce electric bills by storing unused electricity, because you know the power is always there whether you're using it or no--

LIZ

See? All of the intellect, none of the assholery. Because you are not Mastermind.

J.D.

The memories may be gone, but at the end of the day, which incidentally has been moved up to nineteen minutes from now, at the end of the day it's this intellect that will have exploded a bomb.

LIZ

It's not the gun that commits the crime. It's the man. You're not that man.

J.D.

My brain is a gun?

(shakes it off)

I'm not going. If I was Mastermind. I'm not running away from that.

(LIZ drops the bag, closes the door.)

LIZ

Okay. Fine. I'll play along for two minutes.

(LIZ stalks over to the sofa, takes off her jacket and tosses it on the arm.)

LIZ

You humor me when I want to play naughty-TSA-agent and you're guy-with-the-suspicious-bulge, I'll humor you now. You're sure you want to use it for this?

J.D.

Liz...

(LIZ stands opposite him, pissy.)

LIZ

Fine. You're the Mastermind. What are we supposed to do about it now?

J.D.

I need you to help me actualize the lost memories.

LIZ

No, you're supposed to say, for once, 'I don't know,' then I say, 'hey, I got an idea, let's leave town and not risk getting turned into three hundred collective pounds of ground chuck.'

J.D.

Three hundred pounds?

LIZ

Three hundred and five. Max.

(pause)

Fine. I'll actualize. Do I need scented candles for this?
Crystals?

(J.D finally gets up. Her cooperation has energized him,
reluctant though it may be. He paces a wide, irregular, stop-
and-go orbit around her)

J.D.

You're just trying to spark memories. It's like retracing steps to
find the remote. It's not until you see the kitchen that you
remember you opened the freezer and you left it--

LIZ

--I only did that the couple of times. Or more.

J.D.

You're actually perfect for this. You've met him; reported on his
crimes. You can describe him and those events in detail and that's
the only way this can work. You can do this.

LIZ

I don't want to do this! I want to make like a banana and, and,
you know...get the hell out of monkeyville.

J.D.

People could die.

LIZ

We could die if we don't get wheels up around here.

(LIZ gets behind him and tries to push him to the door, but
he just slips aside.)

J.D.

Okay, what's your damage?

LIZ

What are you--

J.D.

All this fear isn't like you. I mean, given the stuff you've done
to get a story; roaming abandoned warehouses for one thing; going
undercover at that Russian Mob nightclub. You were even in that
bank when Mastermind robbed it.

LIZ

That last one was just luck.

J.D.

So why are you so against this?

LIZ

Right now, there's not a story, just the 'splodey. I don't like the 'splodey. Exploded people don't write anything. Besides, if -- and that's if with a capital "if" -- if you were Mastermind, why in the name of Astronaut Jesus would I want to trade you in for him.

J.D.

It's not me for him. Just the getting the memories back.

LIZ

I don't know it works that way. If all my memories were different then I'd be someone else, wouldn't I? So if you switch on a lifetime of being a twisted psychopath and only a year of being the awesome sauce, I think you're still ninety-five percent evil.

J.D.

We are not our memories. I only have a year's worth of memories, I'm not nothing here. This is who I am. The good man--

LIZ

Good in bed, maybe. You're really kind of a jerk.

J.D.

Liz, I have to--

(smiles.)

Yeah, we'll come back to that later. Right now, if there's a chance that I can do something about this. I have to do it. Can you really ask me not to? Can you ask me not to be the guy you fell in love with?

LIZ

I hate logic.

J.D.

I know you do.

LIZ

Logic sucks.

J.D.

Frequently.

LIZ

You ARE the Mastermind. You use logic for bad.

(deep breath)

What do we do? What do I do?

J.D.

Just remember Mastermind. Talk about me.

LIZ

Him.

(LIZ sits on the sofa's edge.)

J.D.

(no time to argue, lets it pass)

Talk about the times you met me. If I can see an event in my mind that might trigger the memory of that event, and that will in turn trigger a cascade of returning memories--

(J.D. stops when she notices her suddenly smile and maybe chuckle.)

J.D.

What?

LIZ

You said "cascade" again.

J.D.

So.

LIZ

Only you could use a word like "cascade" twice in five minutes.

(J.D. smiles at that.)

LIZ

And I don't want that to be gone five minutes from now.

(J.D takes a beat to respect where she's coming from on this.)

J.D.

Hopefully those returning memories will include where the bomb is and how to deactivate it. And maybe where he stashed his cash. That'd be good.

(LIZ slides down to sit on the floor, back adjacent the sofa, knees up.)

LIZ

Hopefully. Since you're apparently pinning our lives on you being a psychopathic freak. If we're still alive tomorrow, we're moving out of the center of the city-- We're moving to the suburbs.

J.D.

How long?

(LIZ looks at her watch.)

LIZ

About fifteen minutes. Fourteen, really. Thirteen, really, really.

J.D.

Describe, as vividly as you can, events in which he was involved. The bank thing.

(Lights slowly fade down to just a spot on LIZ.)

LIZ

Yeah?

J.D.

What happened there?

LIZ

There's parts of that I don't remember. Maybe we should just--

J.D.

Tell me the parts you do remember. In detail

(Only LIZ is visible.)

LIZ

It was the first time I'd come face-to-not-face with Mastermind. Before that, I knew as much anyone else about him. I was still writing up items from the police blotter and pitching human-interest stories about grandmas who install stripper poles

MASTERMIND

Seriously? Section D fluff?

(MASTERMIND is here now. Steps into the edge of the spot. LIZ's position on the floor is now less petulance and more hostage, hands on head. We're in the lobby of a bank.)

MASTERMIND

You scarcely aspire to much, do you?

LIZ

(taking hands down)

I don't aspire to knocking off banks and if I did--

MASTERMIND

Means to an end.

LIZ

And if I did, I wouldn't let it degenerate into a hostage situation.

MASTERMIND

Also a means to an end.

LIZ

How is getting surrounded by a dozen SWAT dudes and half the metro police force on live television a means to an end? Unless you're planning on going out in a blaze of crazy, this is just asinine--

MASTERMIND

(shouting down)

Silence when you're speaking to me!

LIZ

That's not it is it? Blaze of crazy?

MASTERMIND

It takes time to raid a vault and prepare to escape with enough to buy more than an RV to tour the beautiful Southwest in. I intend to walk out of here. Through the front door. Write that down. In fact, in about forty-five seconds, the city's finest tactical squad will breach this room and they will look directly at me and do nothing. I'd like them to pee a little, but not even that.

LIZ

They're not going to let that happen.

MASTERMIND

Yet, it will.

LIZ

What are you going to do, change your colors like a chameleon and from basic black to a tasteful almond and blend in with the walls. Are you gonna get all Pantone fifteen-fifty-five on their asses?

MASTERMIND

Chameleons don't change their colors for purposes of camouflage.

LIZ

They do.

MASTERMIND

A misconception. Chameleons change color as a method of communication and to attract mates.

LIZ

Sexy. No, really. So what's the plan, big guy? Color change?

MASTERMIND

I feeling my deca-annual moment of benevolence coming on. I'm going to do you a favor. Several, in fact. Chief among them, I'll be improving your professional lot in life should you choose to take advantage of the advice I'm about to offer. And I'm going to do it with an economy of words. Four of them to be exact.

LIZ

In stark contrast to whatever is was you were doing just now.

(an awkward pause)

Okay. Advice me up. And if you say "Rob yourself a bank--"

MASTERMIND

--No.

LIZ

Or "buy low, sell high."

MASTERMIND

You're an obnoxious woman.

LIZ

That the four words?

MASTERMIND

The four words are these.

(MASTERMIND kneels down beside her and whispers in her ear. He stands and she looks up at him, confused.)

LIZ

You want to explain that?

MASTERMIND

No.

LIZ

I feel...I feel...

(MASTERMIND holds up a syringe he had palmed.)

MASTERMIND

Very little, I would imagine.

LIZ
(paralyzing, not passing out)
You're a dick, you...kneh...thah...

MASTERMIND
Just a pancuronium-based preparation of my own devise. You'll be
unable to speak or move but you'll be conscious enough to - heh -
(MASTERMIND looks at his watch.)
...watch. Ah. Here it comes. Three...two..one...

(A bright flash of light, then darkness and some audible
bangs, like firecrackers or gunshots. Then quiet.)

J.D.
You don't remember anything else.

(Lights come back up. We're back in the apartment. LIZ's on
her feet.)

LIZ
I'm lucky I remembered the four words. He was right, it changed my
career. After that Mastermind became my beat.

J.D.
What were they?

LIZ
Count the SWAT dudes.

J.D.
The four words? Count the SWAT dudes?

LIZ
Didn't you read the story?

J.D.
I probably did, but for the life of me, I can't seem to remember
it. Can't imagine why that might--

LIZ
You're an obnoxious man.
(as she gets up, gathers her stuff
and heads for the door...)
He was there before the police cut the power and gone thirty
seconds later when the SWAT team secured the bank.

J.D.
There was one more SWAT guy leaving than when they burst in.

LIZ
You remember?

No. Two and two. J.D.

Four. LIZ

Impressive. J.D.

LIZ
I've been able to add since I was, like, this many.

(LIZ holds up three fingers, then adds one, then adds one more, then takes one back.)

I meant his escape. J.D.

LIZ
Sh'yea, it was. He had the SWAT team's breach plan worked out to the second and he used their own tactics--

J.D.
--Why would he tell you his plan like that?

LIZ
I think he wanted to make sure people knew about it. That he outsmarted the police. Again. Anything coming back to you?

J.D.
No. Nothing.

LIZ
Okay, we gave it a shot. We're running out of time and we should be running out of town. We need to roll.

(J.D. gets up and takes hold of the duffel. LIZ heads stage left, like they're leaving. Instead, J.D. takes the duffel stage right and tosses it aside.)

J.D.
We need to try harder. Give me another one.

(LIZ marches back for the bag.)

LIZ
No. You got one. It didn't work. Now I get one and my one is we scurry our scared little asses--

(As LIZ heads back to the door with the bag, J.D. grabs the handle, stopping her.)

J.D.

I'm not leaving.

LIZ

You have to. I love you. I'm not going to leave you.

J.D.

This is a problem I can't solve and I don't like problems I can't solve.

(LIZ forces the bag away from J.D.)

LIZ

You want to risk my life because you want to solve a--

J.D.

I want to risk my life to save lives. I'm asking you to help me.

LIZ

That's the only way I'm going to get you out of here? Is to remember the bomb?

J.D.

Yeah. That or you can whack me on the head with the chair.

LIZ

Why would you say that?

J.D.

Help me.

(LIZ tosses the bag toward stage left and folds her arms.
Pissed and impatient.)

LIZ

This didn't happen when I was dating douchebags.

J.D.

Amnesiac supervillains. We're a whole other level.

LIZ

Okay, how about - let me think - how about when he assassinated the deputy mayor?

J.D.

You were there for that?

LIZ

Not personally, no.

J.D.

Then you can't possibly have the details I need to visualize what really happened accurately. Something else.

(pause)

Deputy mayor? Not the mayor mayor?

LIZ

(shrugs)

Because crazy people always make rational assassination choices. Ooh! There was the heist! The Royal Lavulite Diamonds?

J.D.

And you were there for--

LIZ

--No, I--

J.D.

Liz! I told you I need details. The kind you only get from-- Are you purposely trying to--

LIZ

--Okay, okay. How about when he held the entire city council hostage in their chambers for two days. I was the only media person he spoke to.

J.D.

You were in the chambers?

(Lights fade down to a single spot on LIZ.)

LIZ

It was actually the only demand he made. For me to come in and interview him. At first I didn't even want to. Word was he had bombs set up around the chamber and they were tied into some kinda doohickey that monitored his heartbeat or something. What if I said something that made him mad? I got a mouth on me sometimes. But right then, I could only think of one thing I'd say to him. One question to ask him.

MASTERMIND

Why?

(MASTERMIND steps into the spot and in doing so, places us in us in the city council chambers.)

MASTERMIND

Because I can.

LIZ

So you have no reason for doing this?

MASTERMIND

Because I can is a reason. I want these people - and I use the term loosely - I want them to see that however clever, however smart they think they are, they can be reached. That they are not above the law, but I am.

LIZ

So you're not asking for money? This isn't extortion?

MASTERMIND

If I want money, you know full well, I can take it and I don't have to kill people to do it.

LIZ

That's an odd thing to say.

MASTERMIND

The deputy mayor?

LIZ

Comes to mind, yeah.

MASTERMIND

It was called for.

LIZ

In hindsight, maybe. Or are you saying you knew?

MASTERMIND

You people look backward. I look forward. It was painfully obvious.

LIZ

Obvious if you're an expert in political science, labyrinthine city ordinances, convoluted financial...stuff, and abnormal psychology -- well, that last one you probably--

MASTERMIND

--Were he alive, Miss Lassiter, he'd be the mayor now and this entire city would be--

LIZ

--Yeah. I know. I broke that story.

MASTERMIND

Deinimico hon loquaris sed cogites.

(gives her a chance to be impressed)

Do not wish ill for your enemies, plan it.

(pause; still getting nothing)

You know, Latin? Not an easy language to--

LIZ

--It's just -- you're the bad guy, right? Because you're starting to sound like -- well, I hesitate to say good guy. And there are better ways than killing, stealing and general bastardry.

MASTERMIND

There are no "bad guys," as you say. There are only people doing what they have to do to get what they need. I needed to kill him. That's all you need to know.

LIZ

So what? It was supposed to be a public service. Is this supposed to be a public service? Putting the fear of God--

MASTERMIND

--You flatter.

LIZ

(correcting)

...the fear of YOU into corrupt politicians.

MASTERMIND

Who are you to complain if it makes the trains run on time?

LIZ

Spoken like a true would-be dictator.

MASTERMIND

Mussolini.

LIZ

Please don't tell me that flatters you too.

MASTERMIND

Not so much. If for any reason then the fact that he did not make the trains run on time.

(walking around her, pompous with his correction)

The Italian rail system was the work of the administrations that came before him It scarcely ran on time, before, during or after.

(As she speaks, MASTERMIND circles around LIZ once and then into the dark. Her eyes follow him as though she still sees him clearly)

LIZ

So your one demand in two days of single-handedly holding the city council hostage is to call me in here for an exclusive interview in which you give me no straight or decipherable answers? You shouldn't be holding the council, you should be on it.

MASTERMIND/J.D.

This isn't working.

(Lights come up. Back in the apartment with J.D. LIZ checks her watch.)

LIZ

Finally, you're firing up some neurons. You're ready to run now?

(LIZ picks up the duffel, ready to go.)

J.D.

I just mean that it's not the right incident. I'm not remembering anything. It's just not strong enough in my mind. I don't even know what the inside of the city council looks like. I can't-- I can't visualize. I need something I can work with. I need--

LIZ

No. No more. We're getting out of here. As far as we can get in the next however-many minutes--

J.D.

I can't leave while there's still a chance.

LIZ

I can. I am. I'm leaving. I will leave without you. I will live without you, if you make me.

J.D.

Yeah, okay. Fair enough. We gave it a shot. It didn't work. Hundreds of people will die.

(J.D. goes upstage to the couch.)

LIZ

That's not our fault.

J.D.

What are you doing?

(J.D. Picks up Liz's jacket, turns it around in his hands, straightening it out.)

LIZ

What do you mean what am I doing?

J.D.

We might not be able to get back home tonight and, last I checked, it's still December.

(J.D. holds up her jacket for her. LIZ halfheartedly smiles. Not enough time to think it he was cute. She walks over hurriedly and as she slips her arms in, he drops the jacket. Then, there's a ratcheting/clicking sound.)

LIZ

What is the--? Handcuffs!?

(LIZ is cuffed behind her back.)

J.D.

Yours, TSA-girl.

LIZ

You're insane!

(J.D. guides her to the chair and sits her down, hands behind the chair back.)

J.D.

Given the amnesia and the megalomania and the mask-wearing, yeah, quite possibly.

LIZ

I'm going to scream.

J.D.

Feel free.

(LIZ screams. It winds down into a pathetic withering tone.)

J.D. & LIZ

Everybody's gone already.

J.D.

You want to be pissy for another however-many-minutes and blow up or you want to try to help me save - if anyone - us.

LIZ

This is how it's going to be. I bring back Mastermind or we both go kablooney.

J.D.

Or maybe not. There's no guarantee we're in range of the bomb. Hell, there's no guarantee there is a bomb. It's up to you. I can't do this without you. And you're going to be here either way.

(An awkward pause as it becomes clear J.D. really isn't going to budge.)

LIZ

Do you remember--

(takes a breath - really gonna do this?)

Oh my God, if you don't remember this-- Do you remember when you kidnapped me?

J.D.

Mastermind kidnapped you-- Wait a-- When I? You said--

LIZ

--This, here, doesn't feel familiar to you. It's not exactly the first time. You have to remember. You kidnapped me. You kidnapped me and held me in that abandoned warehouse in the old...abandoned warehouse district.

J.D.

The warehouse? That warehouse?

(Lights fade down to a single spot on LIZ)

LIZ

A year ago. It wasn't long after the city council thing. I wrote a piece - an opinion piece - about you. About Mastermind. It was called--

MASTERMIND

--I know what it's called.

(MASTERMIND enters the spot, placing us, now, in an abandoned warehouse.)

LIZ

I know you do.

MASTERMIND

"What Mastermind Wants?"

LIZ

I know what it's called too.

MASTERMIND

You think you know what I want?

LIZ

It was you that gave me the clue. You said there are no bad guys, only people getting what they need. I just figured out what it is you need.

(MASTERMIND pulls a paper out from some secreted place on his person. Reads from it.)

MASTERMIND

"Mastermind is a step above the cat that brings home the dead bird in his teeth and drops it at it's owner's feet. He's saying "Look what I can do." It's time we all stop being impressed and living in fear of him. Talk about letting the terrorist win."

(MASTERMIND tosses the paper away.)

LIZ

You took the city council hostage just because you could? What was that about? Or, how about the way you felt you had to tell me how you were going to escape that bank job? Because I'm a reporter and you had to make sure people knew that you didn't get lucky? That you outwitted the police by design? Or the Royal Lavulite heist? Those gems were so heavily publicized, it was practically a challenge to you and that's the only reason you did it. After all, those things are unfencable. Tell me I'm wrong.

(MASTERMIND stands silent.)

LIZ

Oh. My. God. That? That's why you do it? You could have gone on about your idea of order or because you wanted money and power, you know, your basic greed thing, but you...you really do it just because you can?

MASTERMIND

My motives are not your concern. Nor do I care what you or anyone else thinks.

LIZ

No. You do. Otherwise, I wouldn't be here now.

MASTERMIND

--It doesn't matter what you think. Because thinking is something you used to do. Much like writing lies about me.

(MASTERMIND takes a syringe and a drug bottle from a pocket and prepares a dose of something colored bright green; international color of toxic and nasty.)

LIZ

Laugh maniacally when you say that, mister.

MASTERMIND

(flat)

Bwah. Ha. Ha.

(flicking the syringe)

You'll find that I don't play society's game. Well, you would if not for your impending doom.

LIZ

The sad thing is that, yeah, you're going to be known for your genius in the end. You'll be known for wasting it. The things you could have achieved if you played by the rules.

MASTERMIND

Don't make me crawl when I know I can run.

LIZ

You'll get your just desserts, dessert-getter.

(MASTERMIND approaches LIZ with the syringe, preparing to shoot her in the jugular with it. She wriggles to avoid him.)

MASTERMIND

I'd tell you not to struggle, but is there really a point?

LIZ

You could've had pie. Chocolate peanut butter cup pie desserts. But, you'll be getting bread and water or like Christmas fruitcake. You're evil, though. You probably like fruitcake...and give it to people as a cruel gift.

MASTERMIND

(stopping to correct her)

Look, that's not what "just desserts" means. A dessert, in that context, is a thing that is deserved, not specifically a--

(LIZ bolts out of her seat, cuffs dangling off one wrist. MASTERMIND stumbles backward, out of the light. LIZ picks up the chair and holds it as a weapon. She swings it at the out of view MASTERMIND when the lights abruptly go out.)

J.D.

That's when the lights went out.

(Lights come back up. Two worlds at once as J.D. is wearing the Mastermind mask. Takes it off and tosses it away. LIZ standing in front of the chair, facing J.D., dangling handcuffs off her finger.)

J.D.

You knew.

LIZ

I wouldn't have them if I couldn't get out of them.

(pause, dumps the cuffs)

I was trying to figure out what to do with you. Call the police or just kill you, then you came to. It became clear pretty quick you pulled a Gilligan. You took a coconut to the cranium and I saw an opportunity. A chance to not waste that brilliant brain. You were a blank slate and I decided I was going to try to draw you into - I don't know - something better.

J.D.

Someone better.

LIZ

Yeah.

J.D.

Someone you could fall in love with.

LIZ

No. I didn't plan that. Suppose it makes sense though. Why wouldn't I fall in love with you. I kinda redesigned you.

(J.D. circles LIZ, seeing her in a new light.)

J.D.

I can forgive that. I can. I could admire that even. And I fell in love with you and you didn't design that, but you knew. You knew. You came in here wanting to run away, and you knew. And when I said I wanted to remember--

LIZ

--J.D.

J.D.

That's not my name. J.D. is John-fucking-Doe. That's not my name.

LIZ

It is now. It's the name given to the man who woke up that night. And of the man I fell in love with.

J.D.

When I said I wanted to save lives, you still didn't say anything.

LIZ

I didn't want to lose you. I didn't want Mastermind back.

J.D.

How many lives is that worth?

LIZ

I don't know. I need you. Do you understand me? I need you.

J.D.

No, I understand. I...yeah, I understand. It sounds to me like maybe you're a better match with Mastermind. It would explain all flirting.

(J.D.drops on the sofa.)

LIZ

Flirting? I'm not flirting. That wasn't flirting that was just - you know - being a smart ass.

J.D.

You do that junior high thing. You pick on boys you like.

LIZ

What about the-- What do you remember? The bomb - is there even enough time?

(J.D. motions for her to join him on the sofa.)

LIZ

What happens? What's going to happen now?

J.D.

We're going to stay right here.

LIZ

(nestling into him on the sofa.)

What do you remember?

J.D.

I remember that "First, do no harm" isn't actually in the Hippocratic Oath.

LIZ

(flicks him on the chest.)

Really, who are you now? And what happens now?

J.D.

You'll know. By the morning.

LIZ

How?

J.D.

Could be I don't remember anything, but I've seen a new side of you and I'll be gone in the morning, if we're still alive. Might be I remember everything and have turned back to the dark side, knowing perfectly well that we're not in danger. And now I find you irresistible for your deviousness, but you won't love me anymore, so there will be mind control drugs in your pancakes. Maybe I remember being Mastermind, but I'm still me. Mostly.

LIZ

What happens if that's the one?

J.D.

We explode.

(BLACKOUT.)

MASTERMIND - SYNOPSIS

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Masked villain, MASTERMIND, hasn't been seen for a year. A prerecorded warning just aired about a timebomb somewhere in the city. In less than one hour, it will explode.

An amnesiac, J.D., believes he was Mastermind.

Fearing for her life and wanting to flee, his girlfriend, LIZ, refuses to help him remember, but J.D. restrains her, forcing her to help him or risk dying if and when the bomb goes off.

She admits he was Mastermind and kidnapped her. She escaped rendering him unconscious, she saw him awaken sans memory and an opportunity to reshape his genius to be of some benefit to society, and fell in love with the man she created.

J.D. is horrified that Liz was willing to allow the bomb to explode. She's horrified at who JD may be now and is chilled by his answer when she asks him.

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CREDITS

Mastermind (2009)

Black Box Theatre - Santa Monica, CA

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The Auslander Adventures in *Astonishing Adventures Magazine* (2007-Present)

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SciFi Zone Radio (2005-2006)

WDGB AM/WAMT AM - Orlando, FL

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Spacehawks Radio Serial (2005) WDGB AM - Orlando FL

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Radio Ghost in "The Clutches of Evil" (2004)

Strawdog Theatre Company - Chicago, IL

Writer

Comic Book Resources (2003-Present)

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UGO.com (2002-2006)

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RECOGNITION

- Hurricane Season One-Act Festival Audience Award for Playwriting (2009)
- Screenwriting Expo Television Award (2008)
- Recognized by the Rod Serling Conference at Ithaca College for Short Feature Writing (2008)
- PAGE International Gold Prize for Television Drama Script (2005)
- The Carl Sautter Scriptwriting Award for 2003 (Drama)