

"Bad Dreams"

LIGHTS UP on MIKE, who stands behind a counter and in front of large shelves of shoeboxes. He whistles a tune, dancing a bit as he dusts off the countertop.

CHRIS storms in, slamming the door behind him.

CHRIS

Mike, tonight is gonna be
different!

MIKE

Whoa.

CHRIS

Tonight I'm not taking whatever
crap you hand out!

MIKE

Okay, don't --

CHRIS

I'm not leaving until I get the
best one in the shop. You
understand? The best one.

Mike picks a shoebox off of a shelf and looks conspiratorially at Chris.

MIKE

How would you like to spend the
next four hours...

CHRIS

Uh-huh?

MIKE

Looking for paper clips...

CHRIS

Uh-huh?

MIKE

In a -- wait for it -- hotel room?

Mike leans back, folds his arms, beams. Chris looks at him a moment.

CHRIS
That is the lamest dream ever!

MIKE
It is a quality --

CHRIS
That isn't even a nightmare!
That's just the same dull crap
you've been giving me for the last
two months.

MIKE
I have not given you "crap."

CHRIS
Last Wednesday? Getting stuck at
an airplane terminal the whole
night? In Boise?

MIKE
That was allegorical.

CHRIS
Alle -- what? Okay, smart guy,
what did it represent?

MIKE
(haltingly)
Your... latent fear of... missed
airline connections.

CHRIS
This... this is not acceptable.

MIKE
Look, Chris.

Mike peers around the room cautiously, crosses closer to Chris, speaks softer.

MIKE

You're not our easiest customer.
Your mind isn't, like, a boundless
font of creativity. I mean: okay.
What would be a really good dream?

CHRIS

A great... big... vest -- I don't
know!

MIKE

Exactly.

CHRIS

I want you people to come up with
something **better** than I can
think up on my own! Is that so
much to ask?

MIKE

I know what you want.

Mike retrieves a box from a more secluded shelf.

CHRIS

No.

MIKE

You want... the sex.

CHRIS

Not from **you** I don't.

MIKE

This one, you get a model...

CHRIS

Nope.

MIKE

On a beach...

CHRIS

Nuh-uh.

MIKE

Naked...

A pause.

CHRIS
(sighing)
What's the catch?

MIKE
She does turn into your mother.

CHRIS
Oh, god!

MIKE
Look. Your mom has only been dead
a few months.

CHRIS
That doesn't make it better!

Mike shrugs. Chris grabs him by the arm.

CHRIS
I'm tired of the disturbing shit.
I'm tired of the back inventory.
I'm tired of getting the ones that
nobody else wants because they're
too goddamn boring. Just one good
dream. Okay? One?

Mike detaches Chris's hand, and carefully, almost
reverentially, pulls out a box from a hard-to-reach shelf.
Chris watches with interest. Mike hands him the box.
Chris makes to open it. Mike stops him.

MIKE
No! This one... is special. You
can't look at it ahead of time.

CHRIS
Okay.

MIKE
It's the most special one there is.
It's a different dream for every
person. And it reaches down into
your soul.

CHRIS
That sounds peachy.

MIKE
There are risks.

CHRIS
I can do risky! I'm Mr. Risky!

MIKE
And some people... some people go
crazy. One man died. This is the
dream that never leaves anybody
the same, Chris.

Chris takes it, solemnly. Mike nods. Chris exits.

Mike puts a few shoeboxes back on the shelves, whistling a little tune. He absently counts down from three to one on his fingers.

After the one, Chris SCREAMS offstage.

Mike smiles. Chris stomps back onstage, grumpy.

Chris hands back the box.

CHRIS
That was my mother.

MIKE
(laughing)
Yeah, I know.

CHRIS
Just gimme the damn paper-clip one.

Mike hands over a box and Chris stomps back offstage.

Mike watches him go.

MIKE
Now I feel like dancing.

Music plays, and Mike dances, as the LIGHTS FADE DOWN.