

RESISTANCE

A short play

by

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RESISTANCE

CHARACTERS

BEBE, a woman, late 70's to early 80's

GEORGE, her husband, late 70's to early 80's

TIME

The present

PLACE

The living room in the couple's apartment

RESISTANCE

The living room of an apartment. GEORGE sits in a wheelchair, BEBE in an armchair. Both are reading books. There is a telephone on a small table. It rings. BEBE reaches for the receiver.

No!

GEORGE

He points to his watch. They return to their reading. The phone keeps ringing, then stops. Pause.

You want some tea?

BEBE

Scotch.

GEORGE

Mandarin Orange Spice or Tension Tamer?

BEBE

Scotch!

GEORGE

Tension Tamer.

BEBE

She exits. Immediately the phone rings again. She hurries back in.

No.

GEORGE

This time BEBE taps her watch as if to say, "it's time." She picks up the phone.

(Pleasantly)  
Hello. Yes. I'm sorry, he's not available. He doesn't take calls between five and eight p.m. Yes, it is one minute past eight, but he still can't come to the phone. You, too, Susan. Goodbye.

She returns to her seat, resumes reading.

BEBE (CONT.)

That was for you.

(Beat)

The woman of your dreams.

(Beat)

Susan Sarandon.

GEORGE

It was some poor schmuck in Maine or Bombay.

(Slight pause. They read.)

It's not enough!

BEBE

What?

GEORGE

Three hours, it's not enough.

BEBE

George—

GEORGE

It's not enough.

BEBE

It's a compromise.

GEORGE

(Fiercely)

IT'S APPEASEMENT! I'm not playing. I am not playing.

BEBE

We made an agreement, a one-month trial.

GEORGE

I changed my mind.

BEBE

After two days?

GEORGE

It's a lousy deal!

BEBE

We get three hours of peace and quiet. Guaranteed.

GEORGE

Wonderful. What about the other twenty-one?

BEBE

George, we talked about this. Telemarketers don't call in the middle of the night.

GEORGE

You think they have any respect for anything? They're colonizers. Look at breakfast TV. Oh no, they said, it'll never fly. No one's going to watch the tube with their coffee and cereal. Now it's round the clock. You can see goddam cooking shows at four in the morning!

BEBE

We'll sign up for the no-call list.

GEORGE

Again? We've done it twice and they still call! Hi, my name's Angela, and I'm with Assholes Incorporated. I'm sorry if you're eating dinner or making love or your house is burning down, but we have the lowest mortgage rates ever. One hundred and fifteen channels in high def. A terrific time-share in Aruba. Screw 'em, screw 'em all! They will not get one minute of my time.

BEBE

So unplug the phone.

GEORGE

(Starting to wheel towards the phone.)  
Exactly.

BEBE

I was joking. George! Stop!

GEORGE

(Stopping)  
Why not? It's the perfect solution.

BEBE

Don't be absurd. We can't just cut ourselves off.

GEORGE

We have e-mail.

BEBE

It's not the same. I call people.

Who? GEORGE

Who? BEBE

Who do you call? GEORGE

David. BEBE

And you always get the machine. GEORGE

That's because he spends most of his time at Randy's. BEBE

I thought her name was Brandy. GEORGE

*His* name is Randy. BEBE

My son has a *boyfriend*? GEORGE

Christ, George, where have you been? BEBE

But that girl he brought home at Thanksgiving... GEORGE

He's moved on. BEBE

I guess. GEORGE

Well, if you talked to him more—on the phone—you'd know these things. BEBE

David never calls, he e-mails. Who else? Who else do you call? GEORGE



What friends?  
GEORGE

What friends?  
BEBE

Yeah, who's left who knows what day it is and doesn't dribble?  
GEORGE

Jim. Paul.  
BEBE

We talk baseball.  
GEORGE

They're guys, George, give 'em a break. There's Sam.  
BEBE

Sam who?  
GEORGE

Your old college roommate Sam.  
BEBE

A retired investment banker.  
GEORGE

Annie!  
BEBE

No—  
GEORGE

What do you mean? Annie's like a sister to you.  
BEBE

Was. When I had legs.  
GEORGE

Oh woe is me. They're your friends, George, every one of them. They may not fall on their swords at the drop of a hat, but they respect you, they find you funny and smart, they love you, warts and all. Don't you know that?  
BEBE

GEORGE

I only have one true friend.

BEBE

That's very sweet. We can't do without the phone.

GEORGE

Why not? Give me one good reason.

BEBE

What is this? What do you want?

GEORGE

Same as always. I don't want to be told what to do, what to think, what to buy—

BEBE

What to be afraid of.

GEORGE

Yes.

BEBE

And you'll get that by dumping the phone?

GEORGE

I get to resist.

BEBE

Fine. I'll get a cell phone like everybody else.

GEORGE

Blasphemy!

BEBE

No telemarketers, no interruptions.

GEORGE

(Emphatically)  
No.

BEBE

I'll put in on vibrate when I'm not using it.

GEORGE

We don't need a phone, any kind of phone.

BEBE

Some of us have responsibilities.

GEORGE

Yeah, we do.

BEBE

Oh, I get it. The chair tips over, you have a stroke, I have a heart attack, and there's no phone. It's masochism!

GEORGE

It's life.

BEBE

And we'll live longer with nine-one-one. And I want to live longer.

GEORGE

No.

BEBE

George, I'm not fighting this battle with you. Okay? You're on your own with this one. I will do the usual 'til I croak. I will march and rally and recycle. I will guard clinics—except in January, it's too damn cold. I will boycott whatever it is we're boycotting. I'll write checks and stuff envelopes, and make calls, and badger my spineless Congressman and his minions about the insanity of our endless wars. And I'll lie down in the street until I can't get up again. And, yes, I will continue to embarrass the hell out of you by massacring every peace and freedom song ever written because I can't carry a tune worth a damn and never will. But hear this, buddy boy. I am not going without a phone, and that's that. This is not selling out, and you will not make me feel guilty about it. In fact, as contradictions go, I'd say it's pretty damn trivial. If there's any justice at all, I will still get a free pass at the pearly gates.

(Beat.)

What's going on with you? You're so angry these days.

GEORGE

I've always been angry.

BEBE

Not like this. You're volcanic. Boom!—out of nowhere.

(Beat)

It's David, isn't it?

GEORGE

NO!

(Beat.)

At Thanksgiving....

(Beat.)

It was the first time he'd seen me since the operation. Only he didn't see me.

BEBE

What do you mean?

GEORGE

All he saw was the chair.

BEBE

No, not David.

GEORGE

Yes. David.

BEBE

You are so ready to....

GEORGE

He did what they all do. He pretended the chair wasn't there but that's all he was thinking about. Right from the get-go, he wasn't himself. He was loud, he was nervous, he was...I don't know, self-conscious. Trying so damn hard to connect, but in this very casual way. It was bullshit. And he knew it, and I knew it, and he knew that I knew. I mean, who was he kidding? The damn chair is right there, an elephant in the room, and he doesn't say a word about it. If he'd just said, Gee, Dad, it must be tough. How do you go to the bathroom? Something, anything. But no, not a word, not a goddam word. Other people, I expect it. They don't know what to say. They're too embarrassed. Or they're thinking, thank God it's not me, and when I fall apart, would I rather lose my marbles or be a cripple like this guy? But David. He's my son, for Christ's sake. I expect more of him.

BEBE

You always have.

GEORGE

To have him look at me. And not see me.

BEBE

He sees you. He loves you.

GEORGE

He thinks I don't respect him, the life he's chosen. He's right, I don't. The world's going to hell in a handbasket, and all he can think about is interior decorating? Things were so much better. You know? We'd made our peace. I kept my mouth shut. Mostly. He even asked me about my writing, about the book. Not that he cares, but at least he asked. That was good. We were doing okay, we were friends again. Friends. And then this. Goddam it!

(He pounds savagely on the chair.)

BEBE

You're jealous of David.

GEORGE

Jealous?

BEBE

He's young and healthy and he doesn't give a shit.

(Slight pause)

GEORGE

I don't want to be bitter. That's all. I don't want to end up one those miserable old farts that people go out of their way to avoid.

BEBE

Well, you've got some work to do.

GEORGE

I can't help it, I keep asking myself—what do I have? Besides this damn chair, what do I have?

BEBE

You have a lot.

GEORGE

(Looking at her warmly)

I know. But you know what I mean. What do I have?

BEBE

You think you're the only one who asks yourself that question?

(Beat)

GEORGE

You know, I'm wrong.

BEBE

Well, there's a first.

GEORGE

No, no, about you and the phone. It's not that you don't need it, you like it. The damn thing rings, and I say, "let the machine take it", and you never do, you always pick it up. And you're never angry or disappointed. I get some automated inquisition from the library about an overdue book, and I go bananas. But you—you take it all in stride. Because you like it. You like hearing another voice.

BEBE

Nothing gets past you, Sherlock.

GEORGE

Yeah, well, it's just that I...I don't know, I forget sometimes. I'm too damn....

BEBE

Pre-occupied?

GEORGE

Selfish. I'm a selfish prick.

BEBE

Irredeemable.

GEORGE

At least we agree on something.

(Slight pause. They eye each other. An unspoken agreement is reached.)

BEBE

(Gleefully)

I'm going to get an I-Phone. They are so cool!

GEORGE

Bourgeois slut.

BEBE

That's me, baby.

GEORGE

Promise me one thing.

BEBE

What?

GEORGE

No text messaging.

BEBE

Sweetheart, you are so twentieth century.

The phone rings. They both look at it and smile conspiratorially. GEORGE wheels himself to within reach of the cord, grabs and yanks it from the socket with a flourish. The ringing stops.

Bravo! La lucha continua. I wonder who it was.

GEORGE

Susan Sarandon.

BEBE

The woman of your dreams.

(Beat. They look at each other with affection.)

I'll get the tea.

GEORGE

Scotch.

BEBE

(Getting up and giving him an affectionate pat)

Whatever you say, big boy.

She exits. Lights fade.

END OF PLAY

