

RESISTANCE

A short play

by

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RESISTANCE

CHARACTERS

BEBE, a woman, 70's to 80's
GEORGE, her husband, 70's to 80's

TIME

The present

PLACE

The living room in the couple's apartment

SET

A wheelchair, an easy chair, and a side table

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.

GEORGE

No!

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

BEBE

You want some tea?

GEORGE

Scotch.

BEBE

Mandarin Orange Spice or Tension Tamer?

GEORGE

Scotch!

BEBE

Tension Tamer.

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

GEORGE

No.

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

BEBE

(Pleasantly)

Hello. Yes. I'm sorry, he's not available. No. He doesn't take calls between five and eight p.m....You, too, Susan. Goodbye.

She returns to her seat, resumes reading.

BEBE (CONT.)

That was for you. The woman of your dreams.

(Beat)

Susan Sarandon.

GEORGE

It was some poor schmuck in Maine or Mumbai.

(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.

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. It'll never fly, that's what they said. No one's going to watch the tube with their coffee and cornflakes. Now it's round the clock. You can see goddam cooking shows at four in the morning!

BEBE

I'll sign us up for the no-call list again.

GEORGE

Doesn't make a damn bit of difference.

BEBE

Well, I'll contact the—

GEORGE

Hi, 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, a terrific time-share in Aruba, want to donate to the police benevolent fund? 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.

GEORGE
Who?

BEBE
Who?

GEORGE
Who do you call?

BEBE
David.

GEORGE
And you get his voice mail every time.

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

GEORGE
I thought her name was Brandy.

BEBE
His name is Randy.

GEORGE
My son has a *boyfriend*?

BEBE
Christ, George, where have you been?

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

BEBE
He's moved on.

GEORGE
I guess.

BEBE

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

GEORGE

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

BEBE

This is ridiculous.

GEORGE

Who? Tell me.

BEBE

Lisa.

GEORGE

Lisa!

BEBE

Lisa is my oldest friend.

GEORGE

Lisa is a grisly old gasbag.

BEBE

She is loyal and kind. And I know I can pick up the phone and call her any time, day or night.

GEORGE

She lives next door.

BEBE

And there are lots of other people—Ruth, Karen and Tom, Anthony—

GEORGE

E-mail them. Write letters. Remember letters?

BEBE

I don't want to write to them, I want to talk to them. And don't tell me *you* don't need the phone.

GEORGE

I don't.

BEBE

You make calls.

To the pharmacy for my meds. GEORGE

What about your friends? BEBE

What friends? GEORGE

What friends? BEBE

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 who supports Trump and plays golf five days a week? GEORGE

Annie! BEBE

No— GEORGE

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

Was. When I had legs. GEORGE

BEBE

Oh woe is me. They're your friends, George, every one of them. They may not fall on their swords for you 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?

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 ditching the phone?

GEORGE

I get to resist.

BEBE

You know what? I've indulged this phone phobia of yours for way too long. Phones aren't always instruments of cultural oppression. They can be useful. They can be lifesavers. I'm going to get a cell phone like everybody else.

GEORGE

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

BEBE

George, for once in your life, could you be reasonable and practical? You have a stroke or I have a heart attack and there's no phone we're dead.

I will not—
 GEORGE

It's a death-wish!
 BEBE

It's a life-wish!
 (Beat)
 GEORGE

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. 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, landline or cell phone, and that's that. It 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.

What else is new?
 GEORGE

It's David, isn't it?
 BEBE

NO!
 GEORGE

(Beat.)
 At Thanksgiving....
 (Beat.)

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

What do you mean?
 BEBE

All he saw was the chair.
 GEORGE

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. We were doing okay, we were friends again. 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 your work cut out.

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 it go to voicemail" and you never do, you always pick 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....

Pre-occupied? BEBE

Selfish. I'm a selfish prick. GEORGE

Irredeemable. BEBE

At least we agree on something. GEORGE

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

I'm going to get an I-Phone. BEBE

Oh God— GEORGE

An XS Max. Top of the line. BEBE

Bourgeois slut. GEORGE

That's me, baby. BEBE

Promise me one thing. GEORGE

What? BEBE

No texting or tweeting. GEORGE

Sweetheart, you are so twentieth century. BEBE

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.

BEBE

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

GEORGE

Susan Sarandon.

BEBE

The woman of your dreams.

Beat. They look at each her 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