QUARANTINE

Written by

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Represented by:

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ROSE, 76 YEARS OLD, DIVORCED.
BERT, 81 YEARS OLD, THE ONE SHE’S DIVORCED FROM.

Living room of a two-bedroom condo in Del Boca Vista, Florida. Along with the basic furniture, there’s a pyramid of toilet paper in one corner, and a fair store of food on the counter, including some cases of chocolate Ensure. There is a big calendar on the wall.

Both bedroom doors are open, one is clearly being used as a den, with an exercise bike and a worn leather couch visible.

ACT I: SCENE I:

ROSE is on the phone with KYLA, 51, her daughter, in New York. (Kyla is never seen or heard.)

ROSE
   Yes, I’m watching. Who’s not watching? I’ve got the news on twenty-four hours a day.
   (pause)
   Of course it’s real news! A normal channel.
   (pause)
   Well, you don’t get to decide what’s ‘normal’ anyway. And don’t make me look at ProPublica again--it’s not for me.
   (pause)
   Yes, yes, I’m being careful. I’ll send you a picture of my hands--they look like old boots, but they’re clean.
   (long pause, agitated, pacing as she listens)
   So what does your father have to do with me? He has a wife. Why isn’t she taking care of him?
   (listening)
   Yeah.... Yeah.... NO! Seriously? Well, I threw him out myself, so I get it. But during this--amazing!
   (listening)
   Oh, don’t you worry about him. Your father, he’s like a barnacle, he’ll find someone else to stick to soon.
   (beat)
   I’m not, baby. No, no one’s making fun.
   (beat)
   (MORE)
ROSE (CONT'D)
No, I just--I don’t think it’s funny either. I’m just not sure what you want me to do. They’re in an assisted living. Let them assist. Why don’t they stick him in another room?
(pause)
I see. Mm-hmm.... Oh, that is terrible. I understand.
(pause)
Well then come get him yourself....
(beat)
Yes, I’m serious. No one is even on the planes--what will he catch? JFK is safer than Whole Foods right now.
(listening, understanding)
No.... Because it’s not happening.... Because I’m not taking him in.
(pause)
That’s offensive--you thinks that’s why? I don’t want your money. I can afford to feed us both, thank God. It’s my sanity, that’s the price. That’s the cost of what you’re asking. And to that you can’t contribute.
(listening)
Now, Ky--now Kyla, now that’s not fair. It wouldn’t be on me, Kyla. It’s not murder to not take your ex-husband back.
(pause)
I said, unfair. Also, if it’s murder he’d need to be dead already. That’s part of the rules--that’s what makes it murder.
(beat)
So, do you want me to take my gallbladder back, too?
(pause)
Well, I think it’s the perfect comparison. I thought I couldn’t live without either of them, and both were nothing but trouble. Best year of my life was when I cut the two of them out for good.
(she paces, long pause)
Yes.... Well, you already said it yourself, those places aren’t safe. Your words not mine.
(listening)
That’s my point, about the safety.
(MORE)
ROSE (CONT'D)
Where would I put him? He’d have to
quarantine. I don’t have where to
stick him.
(beat)
I use that room! The small bathroom
has the good bathtub. And my
exercise bike is in there.
(pause)
It’s not about who’s seeing me--
it’s not vanity. It’s for my heart,
my blood pressure, not to keep my
bum perky.
(listening)
Kyla, this could go on for months.
And for old people, who knows, a
year? Two? Roseanne Barr thinks
it’s a plot to try and kill us.
(offended)
I already told you, regular news.
That was from a website. A person
needs to hear what’s happening not
just from Cuomo’s baby brother and
Hoda Kotb.
(pacing, berated,
listening)
Fine. Fine. Just until you find him
something to move into. That’s it.
Not a day more.
(beat)
Okay, but real quarantine. I can’t
take chances—not for him. Send me
one of my grandbabies and they can
sleep in my bed. But him, he stays
in that room. I’ll put the
microwave in and some cans. Also,
his stuff goes to storage. You want
to talk murder? I’ll be the one
dead if I see one box of his crap
coming back under my roof. I still
have nightmares about that giant
glass bowl filled with matchbooks.
Tacky, tacky man.
(beat)
Okay, I love you too. But if he
wasn’t your father, I’d let him
rot.

SCENE II:
Same apartment, the door to the guest bedroom is now closed.
A walker with tennis balls on the two back feet is next to
it. Also, a sizable windbreaker, something denoting ample
size and bad taste, hangs nearby.
We can hear the flywheel of an exercise bike spinning. Rose stares at the door, looking upset.

ROSE
Yes, keep riding! You need it. I’m surprised you even fit through that door. I was surprised they didn’t have to winch you in when I saw you.
(she waits, listens)
Nothing?
(beat)
Yes, always a pleasure talking with you. Same as before. Everything on deaf ears. Trust me, two weeks isn’t long enough. I hope they change it and you have to stay in there for twenty.
(pause, listening, silence)
Like having a rat in the walls, that noise, the same as that horrible scritch-scritch of little toenails, reminding me something terrible is alive in the house.

SCENE III:

Two full weeks go by in real time as Rose goes about her business, occasionally addressing the door, happy, sad, confrontational, conversational.

Some days she calls her daughter, or receives a call.

She watches the news a solid eighteen hours a day, which we can also see on a giant flatscreen TV. We hear that bicycle wheel spinning for about the same amount of time.

Twice a day she reminds Bert to take his temperature. And about ten times a day she tells him he better not have adjusted her bicycle seat, it’s at just the right height.

She eats at random intervals, Oreos for breakfast, cereal for dinner, boils hot dogs in the middle of the night, no time, no structure. She drinks a lot of chocolate Ensure. (The audience is fed whatever she eats, when she eats it. They use the bathroom when she uses the bathroom.)

Together, we watch a static, quarantine life unfold. The mountain of toilet paper slowly dwindles.

At the start of each day, Rose marks the previous day on the calendar with a big red X.
Scene III:

It is day 16, which includes the day of the initial call, the day of Bert’s arrival, and now the morning marking two full weeks in the guest room and the end of his isolation.

The phone rings.

ROSE
Hey Ky. How are my babies--are they still doing school on the computer?
(beat)
Yes, yes, I know, I wanted to hear about the kids first.
(beat)
Good, good. Okay. Can we have a FaceTime later?
(listening)
Good, yes--I know, I didn’t forget. I was going to get him now.
(listening)
Well, thanks for saying that. I love you too.
(beat)
Yes, we’ll see. We’ll see how it comes out.
(beat)
Ok, hon. I hope so too, sincerely.
(beat)
Ha! Yes, well, so far you’re not an orphan. If we make it through that part, there’s still the murder-suicide option. And I’ll call you if we decide to renew our vows.

She hangs up. She considers the door and, finally, she goes over and knocks. We hear only the sound of the wheel spinning.

She knocks again, this time more loudly, more forcefully. And we hear the bike stop.

She backs away. The door opens.

Out comes BERT, shirtless and in a sweat from his workout. He holds the excess of his formerly huge pants in one hand--so they don’t fall down--and mops at his glistening chiseled chest and defined, thirst-trap abs with a tiny tea towel in the other.

Yes, he is 81, but he’s played by an actor that looks like Martin Sheen in Badlands, or Paul Newman in Cool Hand Luke, or Brad Pitt circa Fight Club, or Idris Elba or Zac Efron whenever...you get the picture.
ROSE (CONT'D)
Hello Bert.
(taking him in)
You’re looking spry.

BERT
Hello Rosie. I wish I could say the same.

ROSE
Still a charmer.

BERT
Thanks for rescuing me.

ROSE
Kyla made me.

BERT
Still. A kindness.

ROSE
Again, not by choice.

BERT
I’ll leave if that’s the case. I’ll figure something out.

ROSE
Okay, then hit the road.

BERT
I’m really going to--

ROSE
Still, all talk.

BERT
Fine, I’ll leave. You’ll see--but before I go...you never told me, what went wrong between us, what was it about me, about us?

ROSE
You were never my type, Bert.

BERT
That hurts, Rosie.

Bert, offended and proud, goes back into the room and comes out with his shirt on, and his pants belted. All he carries is a mason jar and a mask.
ROSE
(second guessing)
Is that, is that a jar of sourdough starter?

BERT
It is, it is. Two-hundred-fifty years old, from San Francisco. It’s super, super active. Doubles every hour.

ROSE
(blushing)
And, and, is that--is that an N95?

BERT
Yup, never used it. An extra. I donated all I had leftover from the construction business to the hospital, but, I kept this one for emergencies. I don’t dare wear it, it’s not right.

ROSE
When I said you weren’t my type, Bert, I was just--it’s all this emotion, after seeing you so long.

(beat)
Would you ever consider--

BERT
ROSE (CONT'D)
Staying here? Baking bread?

Rose is embarrassed.

ROSE (CONT'D)
Yes, both.

BERT
I guess I could give it a try.

She reaches out, and he looks at her extended arm and offers his hand. She takes the mask and puts it on.

Scene IV:

Seven months have passed (not in real time). The toilet paper mountain is gone and replaced with a mountain of sourdough bread. Bert sits on the couch. There is a table in front of it with a 10,000 piece puzzle, partially done. *Tiger King* plays on the television.
Rose is at the kitchen counter with her back to us, she turns around and, wearing her mask, she has poured two Ensures into martini glasses. She is very noticeably six-months pregnant, and glowing. She carries the tray over to Bert. He makes a comfy spot for her, loving. She sits. They hook arms with their glasses and toast.

ROSE
Quarantine--

BERT
It brings out the best in people.

She lifts her mask and they kiss.

THE END

Run time: 16 days and two minutes. No intermission.