

BLUFF

A Short Play

by Mike Folie

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CHARACTERS

MAN - 40s to 50s.

GIRL - 15 or 16.

SETTING:

An Apartment in Park Slope, Brooklyn, NY.

TIME:

The Present

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A MAN sits in an easy chair watching TV, wearing a bathrobe. The TV is muted and no sound comes from it, but we see the flickering light of the picture. The MAN stares at the TV dully. HE looks like he's been living in this chair for days -- maybe weeks or months. There are Chinese food delivery containers and pizza boxes scattered about. Empty soda cans and plastic wrappings. HE slowly comes out of his stupor enough to take a drink of soda from a can. But the can is empty. HE looks at the can stupidly, then tries to drink from it again. Still empty. HE shakes it. Nothing. HE tosses it aside. HE rises with some difficulty and exits, shuffling off-stage. Immediately a young GIRL, 15 or 16 years old, enters, also in a bathrobe and pajamas, and takes possession of the chair. SHE picks up the remote and changes the channel on the TV. SHE turns off the mute, and loud rock and roll blares from a rock video. The MAN re-enters quickly with a gun in HIS hand pointed upwards, sees the GIRL and stops. THEY stare at each other. HE lowers the gun. He turns off the TV.

MAN

Hey.

GIRL

Hey.

(Slight pause.)

MAN

What are you doing here?

GIRL

Visiting.

MAN

Why?

GIRL

I thought I'd spend a little quality time with my Dad.

MAN

I coulda shot you.

GIRL

What's with the gun anyway?

MAN

I'm a cop. They give us guns.

GIRL

Yeah, but don't they, like, take the gun away when you go on, like, mental disability?

MAN

Your aunt know you're here?

GIRL

Yeah. Sure.

MAN

Whattaya want?

GIRL

Nothing.

MAN

Good. 'Cause that's all I got for ya.

GIRL

Don't I know it.

MAN

Okay. Get up, Wise-Ass.

Nope. GIRL

That's my chair. MAN

Was. GIRL

(Slight pause. HE looks at the television)

I was watching something. MAN

World Series of Poker? GIRL

Yeah. MAN

Ferguson won. GIRL

No way! Ten seconds ago there were still twenty-seven people left! MAN

It's a re-run, Dad! The tournament was two months ago! GIRL

I know that! MAN

(Slight pause.)

What happened to that dinosaur man? MAN (CONT'D)

Cave man. GIRL

MAN
Whatever.

GIRL
He goes out seventh.

MAN
Helmuth?

GIRL
Fifth. Chan goes all in with a bluff -- eight-ten suited. Helmuth calls with pocket ladies.

MAN
Hah! And Chan makes the straight!

GIRL
The flush.

(MAN mimes flushing a toilet and makes a whooshing sound.)

MAN
Even better. But that's poker for ya. Sometimes what starts out as a bluff can turn into the real thing right before your eyes.

GIRL
That's what you taught me.

(Slight pause)

GIRL (CONT'D)
And that's the longest sentence I've heard come outta your mouth in six months.

MAN
Go home, Sweetie.

GIRL
This is my home.

(Slight pause.)

MAN

Come on. I'm not kiddin'. I want my chair back.

GIRL

There's lots of places to sit.

MAN

I don't want to sit lotsa places. I want my chair.

GIRL

Tough. Stand. You look like you could use the exercise.

MAN

You're turning into a smart-mouth Brooklyn girl, y'know.

GIRL

Yeah. Isn't it great?

MAN

Let me remind you -- I've got the gun.

GIRL

So shoot me you want your fucking chair so bad.

(HE puts the gun down on top of the TV)

MAN

Hey! Language. Your mother hear you talkin' like that she woulda ...

(Slight pause)

GIRL

Woulda what? Woulda had a fit?

(Pause)

MAN

Did your Aunt Mary put you up to this?

GIRL

She doesn't even know I'm here.

MAN

You just said she does know!

GIRL

I guess I lied.

MAN

Jesus Christ! Call her. She's gonna be worried.

GIRL

You call her. I'm not leaving this chair.

MAN

I will.

(Slight pause. HE doesn't move.)

GIRL

This place smells real bad. You gotta dead body in here? Or is that you?

MAN

Ha-ha. Y'know the sweet air of Brooklyn is right outside that door. And it's all free. You can have all you want on your way home.

GIRL

I'm in my bathrobe.

MAN

Well put your clothes back on and get goin'.

GIRL

What clothes? This is it. I came here like this.

MAN

You walked through Park Slope at night like that?!

GIRL

I haven't seen you wearing anything but a bathrobe in six months.

MAN

Yeah, but I don't go outside in it! I live here.

GIRL

You call this living?

MAN

Yeah!

GIRL

Good. So do I. I live here now, too.

MAN

No way.

GIRL

Yep. I'm gonna live here just the way you do. Like a slug.

(SHE points the remote at the TV and turns it on again. HE turns it off.)

MAN

You're goin' back to your Aunt's.

GIRL

You live here like this! Why can't I?

MAN

You're young. You got the rest of your life ahead of you.

GIRL

Everybody's got the rest of their life ahead of them, Dad.

MAN

Take a look around! Why the hell would you wanna live here?!

GIRL

This is my home!

MAN

It's nobody's home anymore! Okay? It's not even my home anymore, it's ... it's a tomb. A cave. I'm all curled up in here. Like an animal.

GIRL

Are you happy living like this?

MAN

Here it comes. Dr. Phil.

GIRL

Are you?

MAN

Yeah. I'm happy living like this. Or I was, until you came by.

GIRL

Seeing me makes you unhappy?

MAN

It don't help things none. I'll say that.

GIRL

So I guess you don't wanna ever see me again? Is that it?

MAN

That might be best.

GIRL

For who?

MAN

Your Aunt Mary and Uncle Bob are better able to ...

GIRL

You're my father!

MAN

I'm nobody's father anymore, I'm ...

GIRL

Gawd! You're such a fucking loser! You make me sick!

MAN

Well no argument there.

GIRL

I hate you sometimes!

MAN

Oh, Honey! You're an amateur when it comes to hating me. You stick around I'll give you pointers.

GIRL

Okay. I'll just do that.

(SHE points the remote at the TV and turns it back on. HE turns it off.)

MAN

Come on. Let's go. You're not staying here.

(HE pulls HER out of the chair. SHE pulls away from HIM.)

GIRL

You take me then!

MAN

What?

GIRL

You take me back to Aunt Mary's.

MAN

What? You mean go outside?

GIRL

What kinda father would let his daughter walk all the way back to Fifth and Eighth at this hour, all by herself, dressed like this?

MAN

You gotta have clothes still here.

GIRL

Nothin' I can still fit into I've grown some in the past six months, in case you haven't noticed.

MAN

Maybe you could wear some of your mother's clothes.

GIRL

Let's not even go there.

MAN

You look more like her every day.

GIRL

I can't help that.

MAN

I know.

(Pause)

GIRL

You're being very, very selfish.

MAN

I know.

GIRL

And stupid.

MAN

I know.

GIRL

You know! You know! I'm great! Did you know that?! I'm a great kid!. I'm one great, good thing in your life!

MAN

That's the fucking problem! I don't deserve anything good in my life!

GIRL

So why don't you do us all a favor then!?! Here!

(SHE gets up, picks up the gun from the TV and hands it to HIM.)

GIRL (CONT'D)

Go on! You're already dead! Finish it!

MAN

You don't mean that.

GIRL

If you're gonna be dead, then be dead! Don't be a fucking ghost, haunting my life!

MAN

Don't push me, Baby. I just might.

GIRL

What are you waiting for then? Go on!

MAN

You're bluffing.

GIRL

Sometimes a bluff turns into the real thing, Dad.

MAN

Sometimes it does.

(HE cocks the hammer and puts the gun against HIS head. SHE stands HER ground and doesn't flinch.)

MAN (CONT'D)

Is this what you want?

GIRL

If you can't be a man? Then yeah. It's better than sitting up every night crying, waiting to hear you done it. Go on!

(HE starts crying)

MAN

You're just like your goddamn mother!

GIRL

But she's dead. And I'm not. What's your story?

(Pause. HE continues to hold the gun to HIS head and cry. SHE waits.
Lights fade to black.)

The End