

Barricade

By Pamela Morgan

Synopsis

A young woman finds common ground with her grandfather, while battling a shared enemy.

Cast of Characters

<u>Grandpa</u>	60-80, he suffers from senile dementia, early stages. He has the grumpiness of old age but a youthful charm.
<u>Jane</u>	late teens to early 20s, angry, bored, worried about what people think.
<u>Mom</u>	Off stage female sounding voice.

Setting

Inside or out, behind a "barricade".

Place

Present day.

Stage Notes

The barricade can be made out of anything at all. Boxes, a table and chairs, a bench or a couch. Anything that the actors can sit in front of with some reasonable "coverage".

SETTING: The backyard.

AT RISE: An elderly man slumps against a "barricade" formed from a garbage can and several boxes waiting to be recycled.

MOM OS

Jane, go watch your grandfather, I have to run to the store.
(pause) Now, young lady!

(Jane enters from around the barricade, sees her grandfather and stops, pulling out her cellphone)

JANE

Hey.

GRANDPA

Hey.

(silence as Jane stares at her phone)

GRANDPA

It isn't safe to stand there.

JANE

(not paying attention) What isn't?

GRANDPA

There's a damn war going on, Janie, and you're just standing there.

JANE

(still not really listening) Language, Grandpa.

GRANDPA

Don't "Language, Grandpa" me. I'm 50 years your senior. I watched your mother change your diaper. Just because I've become a prisoner in my own home doesn't give you the right to boss me around. I'm not some child. You're the child.

(their eyes meet for a second and Jane sticks out her tongue. Grandpa sticks his back out at her)

JANE

Ok, there's a war going on. Why are you sitting here?

GRANDPA

For cover.

JANE

From?

(he glares at Jane for a moment, deciding whether to trust her or not)

GRANDPA

The enemy.

MOM OS

Jane, I'm leaving now!

JANE

Who's the enemy?

GRANDPA

Get down, quick, before she sees you!

(Jane reacts instinctively, ducking and looking around and then crawling behind the barricade beside Grandpa. Grandpa eyes her again, then crawls to the opposite corner of the barricade and peaks out.)

GRANDPA

Her.

JANE

Who, Mom?

MOM OS

Jane! I'm leaving!

GRANDPA

Is that the name she uses now? That's brilliant.

JANE

Grandpa, she's your daughter.

GRANDPA

Does that make her any less of a dictator?

(Jane considers this a moment than seems to agree, settling her back against the barricade)

MOM OS

Jane, are you listening to me? Are you watching your grandfather?

(Jane stands up and calls over the barricade)

JANE

Yes, Mom, I'm with grandpa, I'm doing exactly what you told me to do so leave me alone!

MOM OS

You do not talk to your mother that way, young lady.

JANE

Fine. Sorry. God. I'm talking to Grandpa.

(Jane sits back down behind the barricade.)

GRANDPA

See? Told you. She tells me when to eat, when to sleep, when to use the bathroom. She forces medicine down my throat like I'm an animal. Worse than an animal, at least she gives the dog a pill pocket. I'd like a pill pocket or a piece of cheese around my pills. She lays out my clothes for me, Janie, every morning, and then watches while I get dressed. She watches while I get dressed! Do this, Dad. Eat that, Dad. Don't forget to wash your hands, Dad. I raised that woman. I cradled her in my arms when she was just a babe, I changed her diaper, I held her hand when I walked her to school. Now she sold my car and my house and moved me into this dump where I'm trapped.

JANE

I fucking hate her.

GRANDPA

Language, Janie. But I fucking hate her sometimes too.

JANE

She doesn't understand me all.

GRANDPA

She doesn't listen to anything I say.

JANE

Like everything she asks me to do, she's not really asking me to do. Jane, can you watch your grandfather. Period. That's not a request, so quit pretending.

GRANDPA

She blames me every time the TV remote gets lost!

JANE

She blames me every time a light gets left on!

GRANDPA

She blames me when the fridge gets left open!

JANE

She blames me when you leave the fridge open!

GRANDPA

Do you know she put child safety locks on the oven so I can't even fry an egg anymore?

JANE

You did nearly started a fire.

GRANDPA

I burned one egg! I didn't burn down the house. I bet she's out looking at old people homes for me right now.

JANE

Actually I think she's going to the store for toilet paper. I swear to god, she hoards the stuff. We have like two dozen rolls in the basement right now. But if she does send you to home, she'll probably find a way to make it my fault.

GRANDPA

You're on her side, aren't you?

JANE

What? No.

(he starts to get defensive, getting to his feet and backing away from her)

GRANDPA

You are. I can see it. You're working for her!

(Jane gets up too, taking a stance to chase him if necessary)

JANE

I mean, she asked me to watch you, but trust me, I'm not on her side.

GRANDPA

I don't trust you!

(they stand off for a moment, and then suddenly he lunges forward and slaps the phone out of her hands, then kicks it away)

JANE

What the heck, Grandpa?

GRANDPA

A communication device, you're recording everything I say and you plan to take it back to her.

JANE

Or maybe I'm not and you just broke my frigging cell phone.

GRANDPA

Or maybe you're not and she's bugged it and listening to everything we say.

(a pause as they stare at each other, then down at the cell phone suspiciously)

GRANDPA

If you're not on her side, prove it.

JANE

How?

GRANDPA

Bring me something, anything, that would drive her insane. Then, and only then, will I trust you.

JANE

Like what?

GRANDPA

What's she got?

JANE

Alcohol.

GRANDPA

Janie, I might be senile but I still know you're not old enough to drink.

JANE

I don't know, you are.

GRANDPA

Weed?

JANE

Grandpa! You're definitely too old for that.

GRANDPA

Besides, your mother would never do drugs.

JANE

They probably would help!

GRANDPA

Use your brain! If you're on my side, you'll know. You'll know.

(Jane looks unsure for a few moments, then looks out over the barricade towards the direction of Mom)

JANE

Okay, I think I have an idea. You must stay here.

GRANDPA

Where?

JANE

Right here, right behind the barricade. You promise? I don't want to risk her finding you while I'm gone.

(Grandpa considers then salutes her and settles back down behind the barricade. Jane makes sure he's settled, then takes off behind the barricade. Grandpa sees the cell phone, he kicks it closer and picks it up, fiddles with it, reads something on it, looks a little confused, he fiddles some more and then attempts to make a phone call, it rings, he drops it startled. Picks it back up and stops the ringing, then sets it back down and waits. Jane arrives with a satchel.)

JANE

Ok, I've got the thing that will prove to you I'm on your side.

GRANDPA

(looking at her a little confused) Hmm?

JANE

(sitting down beside him) Grandpa, are you okay?

GRANDPA

Fine. I'm fine.

JANE

I shouldn't have left you, I'm sorry.

GRANDPA

Why are we sitting here?

(short silence while Jane decides what to say.)

JANE

There's a damn war going on.

GRANDPA

A war?

JANE

Yes, it isn't safe out there.

GRANDPA

But it looks safe.

JANE

Looks can be deceiving, Grandpa.

(silence while Grandpa tries to process this, he is confused, a little alarmed, a little unsure if she's joking, then he picks up the cell phone)

GRANDPA

I think this is your phone.

(he holds it out to her. Jane stares at it, then looks back at Grandpa. Slowly and deliberately, she smacks it out of his hand)

GRANDPA

Why did you do that?

JANE

That isn't a phone, that's a listening device.

GRANDPA

A listening device?

JANE

From you know who.

GRANDPA

Who?

(pause, then she crawls to the edge of the barricade)

JANE

The enemy.

GRANDPA

Who's the enemy?

JANE

I don't know, Grandpa. Maybe you are.

GRANDPA

I'm not! I'm not the enemy!

JANE

Then who is?

(he struggles for a moment, trying hard to remember)

GRANDPA

She is!

JANE

Yes, she is! She's a dictator, a dirty rotten dictator who calls herself Mom but struts all over the place like she pays for everything. She even hides the TV remote from you all the time and then acts all, Oh, Dad, losing the remote again.

GRANDPA

I knew it!

JANE

So I took something from her.

GRANDPA

You didn't!

JANE

I did, Grandpa. Something that will drive her crazy.

GRANDPA

Tell me.

(Jane dumps open the satchel and rolls of toilet paper spill out. Grandpa watches, delighted)

GRANDPA

Toilet paper!

JANE

Toilet paper.

GRANDPA

She's going to hate this.

JANE

She's going to flip her lid.

GRANDPA

Why do you hate her, Janie?

JANE

Why do I hate her?

GRANDPA

Yeah. You said you hated her. You said she's going to kill you.

JANE

I didn't say that...

GRANDPA

On your phone, I read it on your phone.

JANE

When were you looking at my phone? That's my private phone, Grandpa, you can't just read my text messages!

GRANDPA

You shouldn't hate your Mom.

JANE

You don't understand! She doesn't understand me. Now who's on her side!

(she picks up a roll and tosses it at him)

GRANDPA

Don't you accuse me of consorting with the enemy.

(he picks up the roll and throws it back at her.)

JANE

Stop it, Grandpa!

(he tosses another roll at her head)

JANE

I said stop it! Stop it! You have no idea what I'm going through, neither does she!

(she starts lobbing rolls at her grandfather, clawing at the paper as she talks, unraveling it, destroying it, Grandpa should sit and listen)

JANE

At school, I'm picked on and bullied, I try to tell her and you know what she says? Toughen up, Jane, its only school, its not the real world. How does she even know? When she was in school like a hundred years ago, she was a cheerleader and dated the captain of the football team and everyone loved her and she got straight As. And I want to kill myself sometimes, so I don't have to keep trying so hard. I'm so sick of trying to live up to her standards. I'm tired of trying to be like her, to make her proud, to be the person she thinks I am. I'm not that person. I'm not. And I never will be. I'm never going to date the captain of the football team because I think I like girls and I haven't told her yet. I can't tell her, she would never accept it. Because it wouldn't fit her straight perfect little image of her straight perfect little daughter who will grow up and turn out exactly like she's turned out. Straight and perfect. Well, fuck that! Fuck her! FUUUUUCK.

(there is a long silence as they take it in, then Grandpa throws back his head)

GRANDPA

FUUUUUUUUUUUUCK!

(Before she can stop him, Grandpa starts unraveling more rolls, angry like she was, he claws at the paper, tosses it at her, destroying it. A fight should ensue, angry and desperate at first, each of them caught in the rage of their impotence. They should throw the rolls at each other, wanting to hurt anything and everything they can with the toilet paper. But as their anger fades, it should turn into something joyful, something fun and wild and rambunctious. They should dance and laugh and shout and run around the barricades, throwing toilet paper at each other, dodging and ducking and having the time of their lives. Their energy finally spent, and all the toilet paper used up, they should wrap themselves around whatever rolls remain, so that they sit covered in it and sink to the ground in a pile of toilet paper behind the barricade)

GRANDPA

She's going to find out, you know.

JANE

About me?

GRANDPA

About the toilet paper. But about you too. What will she do to you?

JANE

Why are you worried about me? You're the one she's keeping prisoner.

GRANDPA

She's going to kill you.

JANE

Well, that's what dictators do, isn't it?

GRANDPA

Tell me about her.

JANE

Who, Mom?

GRANDPA

The girl who you're willing to die for.

JANE

How did you know there was a girl?

GRANDPA

Grandparents know these things.

JANE

Oh, god, Grandpa, I don't want to talk to you about my dating life. And especially not my gay dating life, that's just weird.

GRANDPA

Humor me, I'll forget soon enough I'm sure.

JANE

Her name's Kasia, she's from Lithuania. She has these eyes...

GRANDPA

Eyes are good.

JANE

This feels so weird, I can't talk to you about this!

GRANDPA

Fine, then why aren't you telling your mom?

JANE

Because she doesn't know I'm gay. Well, or maybe I'm gay, I think I'm bi, or I'm not really sure. How do I explain that to her when I'm still figuring it out myself? You know how Mom is. *(beat)* What if I tell her and she doesn't . . . I don't know, accept me?

GRANDPA

Or what if she kills you?

JANE

Grandpa.

GRANDPA

Janie, would you really hurt yourself?

JANE

What do you mean?

GRANDPA

You said sometimes you want to kill yourself. Is that true?

JANE

Yes sometimes, no, I don't know?

GRANDPA

I'm the wrong person to talk to about this, because I'm old man and I forget everything. But I have lived long enough to know that life is hard sometimes, Janie. Fucking hard. But its worth it. And your mom, she loves you. And she loves me. We both know that, even if we destroyed a hundred rolls of toilet paper to prove otherwise.

JANE

It was more like ten.

GRANDPA

I happen to know that a pretty incredible person raised that woman.

JANE

You?

GRANDPA

Your grandmother. Who your mom and I used to hide from when we were sure she found out we ate all the chocolate ice cream for breakfast. So why don't you give her a chance?

JANE

So this kind of behavior is an ongoing thing for you, huh?

GRANDPA

I'm a rebel, what can I say?

JANE

And you wonder why she put a GPS tracker on you.

GRANDPA

Wait, she did what??

MOM OS

Jane, where are you at? Is your grandfather okay?

JANE

If I tell her about Kasia, then you have to take the fall for the toilet paper fiasco.

GRANDPA

She'll never let me have a roll of toilet paper again, she'll keep me to one square at a time. *(Jane is silent)* She'll lock me out of the bathroom! *(silence)* She'll make me wear a diaper, that's torture!

MOM OS

(sounding closer) Jane? Dad?

(Jane and Grandpa stare each other then he gives in)

GRANDPA

(calling over the barricade) Janie had no part of the toilet paper at all, it was all my fault. Please don't put me in a diaper.

JANE

(also calling over the barricade) I'll clean it up, but then do you think we could maybe talk? I want to tell you about someone I'm dating.

(they both stand sheepishly, draped in toilet paper, arms raised)

End of Play.