

The Bunker
By Ruth Cummings

Dramatis Personae

Sarah Early forties, well kept.

Michael Sarah's husband, mid-forties, well kept.

Johnny Early twenties, tall, scruffy looking.

Emily Late twenties, heavily pregnant.

Albert Mid-seventies, uses a walking stick.

ACT I SCENE 1

It is 1943, London. It's a small section of the London Underground. There is the low level noise of an air raid siren and as the lights come up SARAH and MICHAEL, a well-kept and middle-aged couple are seen on stage laying down blankets.

SARAH: Not like that Michael, like this. The blanket as to go slightly up the wall as well.

MICHAEL: I don't see why it matters. We're not going to be here for long and honestly, comfort isn't my main priority.

SARAH: Well it should be. And how would you know how long we're going to be down here for? It could be hours.

MICHAEL: Or it could be no more than thirty minutes.

SARAH: Fine. You lay out your blankets the way you want to. But I don't want to hear any moaning that your back hurts and... (To offstage) Hey! Hey, you! Stop running around!

MICHAEL: Oh leave them, they're just having fun. Not a bad idea if you ask me. Make the most of a bad situation.

SARAH: And how would you do that?

MICHAEL: Moving away from you would be a start.

ACT I SCENE 2

Some time has passed and MICHAEL and SARAH are still sat peacefully. Barking is heard offstage.

SARAH: Is that a dog? Has someone got a dog down here?

Johnny enters.

JOHNNY: Rover! Rover! Stop ya barking and get over here.

SARAH: Is that your dog?

JOHNNY: What?

SARAH: You can't have your dog down here.

JOHNNY: What's it to you?

SARAH: I'm allergic to dogs. You can't have that thing down here. Tell him Michael, tell him I'm allergic.

MICHAEL: Sarah, sweetie, for the sake of the dogs life, I think you can bear a runny nose.

JOHNNY: There ya go. He's settles down up there, he won't be bothering ya. Now do ya mind if I sit?

MICHAEL: Of course not. Make yourself comfortable.

JOHNNY: Here, what have ya done with these blankets, you need to get them going up the wall. That's better. So what were a lovely couple like you doing in this part of town?

SARAH: Visiting my mother.

JOHNNY: She lives round here?

MICHAEL: Mm, we keep telling her to move, that she can go and stay with my parents at least till the war's over. But she's. stubborn old cow.

SARAH: I don't really think we should be discussing our personal matters with a complete stranger.

MICHAEL: What were you doing out, oh, I don't know your name.

JOHNNY: Yes well apologies but I don't discuss my personal matters with strangers. Nah, I'm Johnny.

MICHAEL: Johnny. It's nice to meet you. I'm Michael and this is my wife Sarah. So what were you up to today?

JOHNNY: Just out walking the dog. Nothing interesting.

SARAH: I can't believe they let you in with that thing. It's cramped enough, we don't need animals taking up space.

JOHNNY: Funny, I was about the say the exact same about you. And he's got just as much of a personality as you do. I couldn't just leave him there. If I had to choose between you or him, I'd choose him in a heartbeat.

SARAH: Well then clearly you're not right in the head.

JOHNNY: Oh is that so is it?

SARAH: Yes! Who in their right mind would choose a dog over another human?

JOHNNY: Anyone, provided you're the human.

MICHAEL: Okay, how about we all just calm down, take a seat, and try to relax. We're already stressed out enough. I'm sure no one needs your bickering on top of it. Johnny, I hope you don't mind me asking, but you're quite young. Shouldn't you be fighting?

SARAH: He probably conned his way out of it. Or argued that someone had to stay home to look after that flee infested mutt.

JOHNNY: Actually, I'm exempt. Key industry. I'm an engineer, I offered to sign up, but they said they couldn't find anyone to replace me. Said I'd be more valuable here working than dead on a field.

MICHAEL: I'm a baker. I run the little shop down by the shoe cobblers. Best bread for three miles, we think. My brother's fighting though. He's around your age actually. One of the first to sign up. He was so excited for the chance to defend our country. Think of the stories, he said. I'll be able to tell my grandkids that I helped, I helped us keep our freedom, helped us get the life we deserve. Of course he doesn't even have a girlfriend never mind anything

close to grandkids. But he's always been optimistic. Mum cried so much when he left. Dad would hold her and say, not Jack, they're not gonna get Jack. Before you know it he'll be running back in through that door telling us all these stories about him and his new friends. I believed my dad then. But now I'm not so sure.

JOHNNY: Do you ever hear from him?

MICHAEL: Oh yeah, a constant stream of letters. Any chance he got he'd write us one. Pages and pages with every little detail about him and the other soldiers he's with. Haven't had one for a while though. He probably just hasn't had a chance to sit down and write.

SARAH: Yeah, probably.

ACT II SCENE 1

More time has passed. SARAH, MICHAEL and JOHNNY are sat together quietly. Shouting can be heard in the distance.

SARAH: What's that now? Can no one just sit in peace around here?

Michael: You're one to talk.

Sarah: What was that?

Michael: I said, I know, it's awful isn't it.

Sarah: Hmm, what do you think they're fighting about?

Johnny: probably who's hogging the blankets, or taking up the most room, or someone won't share food, or someone's snoring too loud. Yep, they're all the arguments I've had down here.

Sarah: Oh I see, youre the one usually making that racket are you?

Johnny: Guilty as charged.

Enter EMILY, a heavily pregnant woman in her late twenties.

Emily: Do you mind if I sit here? I'm supposed to avoid stressful environments. And, well, you heard the shouting.

Sarah: Of course, of course. You two, up.

Michael and Johnny: What?

Sarah: Get up and give her your blanket. There you go. Comfortable?

Emily: Yes, thank you. Smart idea to have the blanket going up the wall like this. Are you sure you don't mind. I don't want to take up too much space.

Johnny: Kind of difficult surely, in your condition.

Sarah: Johnny! Don't mind him. He's an idiot. But surely, if youre supposed to avoid stressful environments, London isn't the best place for that.

Emily: Oh I know, I'm supposed to be leaving in a few days to my uncles house out in the country. He's a farmer as well, so he knows how to deliver a baby in an emergency. Oh, I'm Emily by the way.

Sarah: Right. Well, Emily, for now you can just stay here with us. Where it's calm, and relaxing, and perfectly.. (she is interrupted by Johnny)

Johnny: (Shouting) Rover! Get off that mans leg! Sorry.

Sarah: Mostly calm anyway.

Emily: No, this is perfect. Anywhere is better than with them lot shouting their heads off.

Michael: What were they shouting about?

Emily: Someone was snoring too loud or something.

Johnny: Called it.

Michael: So where's the father? Is he off fighting?

Emily: Yeah, off doing his part for king and country. I didn't even know I was pregnant when he left. It is his though! Don't go thinking I've been mucking around while he's risking his life. He only left eight months ago so it is his.

Sarah: And how far along are you?

Emily: Around eight and a half months. That's why I'm supposed to avoid stressful situations. The doctor said anything could trigger an early labour.

Johnny: What like being trapped underground with hundreds of anxious strangers?

ACT II SCENE 2

More time passes. SARAH, MICHAEL, JOHNNY and EMILY are sat together. They all appear quite comfortable except for EMILY who begins to appear distressed.

Sarah: (To Emily) Are you okay?

Emily: Yeah, it's just cramps. I'll move around a bit, walk it off.

Johnny: Hey Emily. What's this you've been sitting in?

Emily: What? I didn't sit in anything I've been on that blanket.

Johnny: Yeah, it's on the blanket.

Sarah: Oh my god. That's your water. Your water broke. Those aren't cramps. That's labour! You're going into labour!

Emily: Okay, this is not the calm environment it once was!

Sarah: It's okay, you're going to be okay, we'll get you through this. Is there a doctor here? Anyone? Anyone know how to deliver a baby?

Johnny: Where's your uncle when you need him?

ALBERT enters, hobbling on a walking stick.

Albert: I do. Why do you ask?

Sarah: Well it's her, Emily, she's going into labour.

Albert: Here? Is this the best place for it?

Michael: Well no, but I don't think she planned it this way.

Albert: Right well, let's get you comfortable. Bring over those blankets. Now, lay your head down, and I'm going to have to look at the situation downstairs if that's okay with you.

Emily: Well, yes I'm fine with you looking but I don't really want those two to see.

Sarah: Right, you two turn around. I'll hold this spare blanket up, give you a bit of privacy. There, it's just like a hospital ward now isn't it.

Emily: Well apart from the hundreds of other people, sure.

Albert: It's all looking good down there. Should be easy sailing. All you've got to do is push, when I tell you.

Emily: Okay, I can do that. I just push. Pushing's easy, I can push. Just push. Push.

Albert: And also try not to get hysterical.

Emily: I might struggle with that one. I don't know if you've noticed, but I'm

giving birth to a baby in a bunker in the middle of an air raid.

Michael: this has been a long one.

Johnny: Tell me about it. I've could've guessed that you got pregnant here as well.

Sarah: Turn around. Give the woman some decency for christs sake.

Johnny: My blanket, decency, what next? She'll be asking for a whole bar of chocolate in a minute.

Sarah: It was my blanket, and she will get whatever she wants, because she has been carrying around a human, that is now trying to claw its way out of her.

Emily: I'd really like you all to just be quiet!

Albert: Okay, now you have to start pushing. Come you can do it. Breathe. Push again. That's it. I can see the head. Big push now. Keep going. You did it.

Emily: I did it? It's over? Is it okay? What is it? Let me see!

Sarah: It's a he, and he's beautiful.

Emily: I don't hear him. Is he okay?

The noise of a baby crying is heard. Then the sound of an explosion.

Blackout.