

We Interrupt This Program

Arthur Keyser



We Interrupt this Program



Turn to ArtAge for supplies books, plays, and materials to older performers around the world. Directors and actors have come to rely on our 30+ years of experience in the field to help them find useful materials and information that makes their productions stimulating, fun, and entertaining.

ArtAge's unique program has been featured in *The Wall Street Journal*, *LA Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *American Theatre*, *Time Magazine*, *Modern Maturity*, on CNN, NBC, and in many other media sources.

ArtAge is more than a catalog. We also supply information, news, and trends on our top-rated website, www.seniorthatre.com. We stay in touch with the field with our very popular e-newsletter, Senior Theatre Online. Our President, Bonnie Vorenberg, is asked to speak at conferences and present workshops that supplement her writing and consulting efforts. We're here to help you be successful in Senior Theatre!

We help older performers fulfill their theatrical dreams!

ArtAge Publications

Bonnie L. Vorenberg, President

PO Box 19955

Portland OR 97280

503-246-3000 or 800-858-4998

bonniev@seniorthatre.com

www.seniorthatre.com

NOTICE

Copyright: This play is fully protected under the Copyright Laws of the United States of America, Canada, and all other countries of the Universal Copyright Convention.

The laws are specific regarding the piracy of copyrighted materials. Sharing the material with other organizations or persons is prohibited. Unlawful use of a playwright's work deprives the creator of his or her rightful income.

Cast Copies: Performance cast copies are required for each actor, director, stage manager, lighting and sound crew leader.

Changes to Script: Plays must be performed as written. Any alterations, additions, or deletions to the text must be approved.

Permission to Film: You do not have permission to film, record, or distribute the play in any medium. You are also not allowed to post on electronic services such as, but not limited to, YouTube. Exceptions must be granted by written permission from the publisher.

Royalty: Royalties are due when you perform the play for any audience, paying or non-paying, professional or amateur. This includes readings, cuttings, scenes, and excerpts.

The royalty for amateur productions of this show is posted online. It is payable two weeks prior to your production. Contact us for professional rates or other questions. Royalty fees are subject to change.

Insert the following paragraph in your programs:

*Performed with special permission from ArtAge Publications' Senior Theatre
Resource Center at 800-858-4998, www.seniortheatre.com*

WE INTERRUPT THIS PROGRAM

by
Arthur Keyser

CAST

CYRUS FINNEY: a fifty-nine-year-old man.

PHOEBE FINNEY: a fifty-seven-year-old woman.

RADIO ANNOUNCER: (*off-stage*).

Place

The interior of a living room in a modest home, located in the suburbs of a small city in the Midwestern United States. Despite the fact that the play occurs in the current period, the characters' costumes, furniture and furnishings are reminiscent of what one might have seen in a middle-class home in the 1930s.

There is no TV, but there is a radio, vintage 1937.

Time

A weekday morning on June 3 of the current year.

WE INTERRUPT THIS PROGRAM

At rise: (Cyrus and Phoebe, who have been married to each other for thirty-nine years, are sitting in upholstered chairs in the living room. Music is playing quietly on the radio. Phoebe is knitting and Cyrus is reading the morning newspaper. Throughout the play, neither ever raises his or her voice above a normal level.)

PHOEBE: *(looking up)* Anything of interest in the paper this morning, Mr. Finney?

CYRUS: Just the usual things...weather, church announcements, and something about the boys down at the high school and their annual bonfire.

PHOEBE: They must have had a good time.

CYRUS: Seems as though they did...but the fire got bigger than usual.

PHOEBE: Things like that can happen.

CYRUS: Burned down the whole school.

PHOEBE: Boys will be boys.

CYRUS: What's that you're knitting?

PHOEBE: A throw for Mother's bed.

CYRUS: Guessing it's going to take you a while.

PHOEBE: About three years.

CYRUS: Think she'll make it. Didn't she just turn ninety-six?

PHOEBE: Ninety-seven.

CYRUS: Is it a surprise?

PHOEBE: She says waking up each morning is a surprise.

CYRUS: She fancies being a stand-up comedian. Shame, she never learned how to smile.

PHOEBE: Come to think of it, I never did see her smile much...certainly not when I told her you and I were planning to marry.

CYRUS: Thought I saw a small smile at your father's funeral, but I might be wrong. It could have been indigestion.

(The music coming from the radio suddenly stops and a voice is heard.)

RADIO ANNOUNCER: We interrupt this broadcast for a special report. From the oval office in the White House, a spokesman has informed us that a space object, called the Texas Asteroid because of its size, originally expected to pass safely past the earth, has changed its course and is now heading directly toward us. Scientific calculations confirm that the asteroid will strike us on September 3rd, exactly three months from now and destroy our planet. The President has asked all Americans to turn to whatever spiritual or religious faith you may follow in these last few months of our existence. All radio stations and TV networks will be asked to have a short period of silence after which regular broadcasting may be resumed.

(Cyrus puts down his newspaper and Phoebe puts down her knitting. They turn to each other.)

PHOEBE: Did you hear that?

CYRUS: Sure did. I've been meaning to tell you that the scratching noise on the radio has been getting worse. Can't complain. It was my grandfather's and those radios never lasted more than seventy-five years.

PHOEBE: With that asteroid coming in three months, we can probably get a good deal on a new one at the mall.

CYRUS: I'll stop at the appliance store tomorrow.

PHOEBE: I've been meaning to talk to you about our living room furniture for a while. It was my grandmother's and starting to look a bit worn. This might be a good time to look for a new sofa.

CYRUS: We could buy one on credit. I think I saw an ad in the paper that says the first payment won't be due until six months after purchase.

PHOEBE: You've always been so much better than me with numbers, Mr. Finney.

CYRUS: That's how I've held onto my job as the third assistant to the assistant bookkeeper so long.

PHOEBE: I hate to give you bad news.

CYRUS: Just say it. We've always shared the bad news with the good.

PHOEBE: Our annual Labor Day barbecue could be on the same day that thing hits us.

CYRUS: Why don't we schedule the party a week earlier?

PHOEBE: I never would have thought of that. You can always find a way to work things out.

CYRUS: Who were you planning to invite this year?

PHOEBE: I was thinking of just our close neighbors, but with the news, I'd like to make the list larger...even include your brothers.

CYRUS: Are you sure you want to do that? They are awfully boring.

PHOEBE: They're so different from you.

CYRUS: I was the only one in the family with a sense of humor.

PHOEBE: I don't like to be bringing up more bad news, but there's a problem with our theatre subscriptions.

CYRUS: What's that?

PHOEBE: Our tickets for the first show of the season at the community theatre are for September 10th. I was really looking forward to seeing it and now —

CYRUS: When does the show open?

PHOEBE: August 30th.

CYRUS: Why don't you call the box office and see if you can switch our tickets to August 31st? Don't let them try to talk you into opening night. Actors are always nervous the first night.

PHOEBE: I'll call tomorrow while you're out buying the new radio.

CYRUS: I can't wait to see the headlines the day before that thing hits us. That newspaper's going to be worth saving for my scrapbook.

PHOEBE: You may want to buy a few extra copies.

CYRUS: I hate wasting money, but maybe I'll do that.

PHOEBE: You could use some of those quarters you've been saving for a rainy day.

CYRUS: I don't know. An asteroid is not the same as a rainy day.

PHOEBE: You know best. They're your quarters.

CYRUS: I guess this is the best time to tell you some things I've been keeping to myself.

PHOEBE: You've been keeping secrets?

CYRUS: I didn't want to upset you.

PHOEBE: Go on. Just fess up.

CYRUS: I hate your mother...really hate her. She hasn't said a word to me in over thirty years.

PHOEBE: She's never been one to talk that much. I'll mention it to her. If I get her to say hello to you, would that be okay?

CYRUS: I guess so. *(pause)* There's something else. You've never called me by my first name.

PHOEBE: I never liked your first name.

CYRUS: You should have told me.

PHOEBE: I might as well tell you some things you don't know.

CYRUS: Can't think of a better time.

PHOEBE: Do you remember meeting Bradley, that nice looking police officer who lives on the next block?

CYRUS: I think so.

PHOEBE: While you were at work, I let him have his way with me.

CYRUS: Straying one time probably happens in most marriages.

PHOEBE: It was seventy-three times.

CYRUS: Do you think any of the neighbors knew about it?

PHOEBE: I'm sure they all knew about it.

CYRUS: No one said a word to me.

PHOEBE: You're not popular with them. They don't like Democrats.

CYRUS: I wish I'd known that.

PHOEBE: There's more.

CYRUS: What else?

PHOEBE: Bradley's next-door neighbor, Frank was the first to find out.

CYRUS: That must have complicated things.

PHOEBE: He said he was going call you.

CYRUS: He never did.

PHOEBE: I found a way to keep him quiet.

CYRUS: You let him have his way with you?

PHOEBE: Only eight times...and never more than twice in a week.

CYRUS: Did Bradley ever find out about Frank?

PHOEBE: Oh, no. I couldn't let that happen. Bradley can be very jealous.

CYRUS: It's probably best he never finds out.

PHOEBE: That's how I feel...happy you agree.

CYRUS: Any thing else you want to tell me?

PHOEBE: Bradley and Frank weren't the only ones.

CYRUS: I'm not surprised.

PHOEBE: Most of the other men living on our street have had their way with me.

CYRUS: Any ones besides all of our neighbors?

PHOEBE: No one important.

CYRUS: You should have kept a written record.

PHOEBE: I did.

CYRUS: Am I on the list?

PHOEBE: Three times in the last five years.

CYRUS: By my count, it was four?

PHOEBE: You could be right. Sometimes I forget things that don't seem important.

CYRUS: Is that all of it?

PHOEBE: I wrote down a score each time.

CYRUS: I hope mine wasn't the lowest.

PHOEBE: There was one man lower.

RADIO: We interrupt our broadcast for another special announcement from the White House. Scientists from the National Space Agency have determined that the previous announcement about the Texas Asteroid was based on an erroneous set of calculations. It will pass by the earth safely and will have no effect upon our planet. The President has issued an apology for the error. A copy of that apology may be found online at whitehouse.org. We now return you to your regular programming.

PHOEBE: *(picking up her knitting)* That's a shame.

CYRUS: *(picking up his paper)* Now, we won't get that new radio at a special discount.

PHOEBE: There is a bright side.

CYRUS: What's that?

PHOEBE: We don't have to exchange our theatre tickets.

CYRUS: Never thought of that. But I'm still a bit disappointed.

PHOEBE: Why?

CYRUS: I won't have that newspaper headline for my scrapbook.

PHOEBE: I'm sure there's going to be others.

CYRUS: But nothing like everyone being turned to dust.

PHOEBE: About our Labor Day barbecue—

CYRUS: We won't have to change the date.

PHOEBE: How would you feel if I invited Bradley?

CYRUS: I'd be disappointed if you didn't. He's practically a member of our family.

THE END