

SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Phil Lewis

Thriller - set in the future
(Suitable for Drama Festivals)

Approximately 20 minutes

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SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Set in the world of Big Brother, everyone has to ask permission for even the simplest things. Communication is through *The Box*. In the family home the teenagers begin to rebel. Isn't this excessive control just a con? Is there really anyone at the end of *The Box*? Their arguments are persuasive, so the truth is put to the test.

CAST

PAUL:	Teenager	15+
DANA:	Teenager	18+
RENE:	The Mother	40+
RAY:	The Father	40-50
MOTHER:	Grandmother	60+ (Voice only)
BOX:		(RECORDED VOICE ONLY)

Dress: Not modern. Simple and functional.

SCENE 1. MORNING

THE ACTION TAKES PLACE IN A SINGLE ROOM OF A SMALL FLAT. DECORATION AND FURNISHINGS ARE MINIMAL.

THE HOME IS FUNCTIONAL, BUT HAS ALL THE REQUIREMENTS FOR MODERN LIVING. TV SCREEN, SEATING AREA, BREAKFAST BAR. DOORS OFF TO KITCHEN AND PASSAGE TO FRONT DOOR. OTHER EXITS LEAD TO VARIOUS BEDROOMS, ETC. THE COLOUR IS UNIFORM, BUT CLEAN AND SOMEWHAT TIDY. THE FURNITURE COMPRISES A SOFA, A FEW CHAIRS, AND A DINING TABLE.

DOMINATING THE ROOM IS *THE BOX* ON ONE WALL. THIS IS METAL AND PURELY FUNCTIONAL. THERE IS A LARGE RED BUTTON, A SMALL NUMERIC KEY PAD AND A DOMED RED LIGHT ON TOP.

(PAUL ENTERS SLEEPILY FROM HIS BEDROOM. HE MOVES AND SITS AT THE TABLE, RESTING HIS HEAD IN HIS HANDS AS IF TO GO BACK TO SLEEP. DANA ENTERS SLOWLY AND MOVES TO THE BOX. SHE PRESSES THE RED BUTTON AND WAITS PAITENTLY.)

BOX: Identification?

(DANA TAPS IN A FIVE-DIGIT CODE ON THE KEY PAD)

BOX: Please wait. (THERE IS A FEW SECONDS DELAY). What is your request?

DANA: Shower please.

BOX: (AFTER A FEW SECONDS DELAY) Granted.

(DANA EXITS WEARILY OUT TO THE BATHROOM. RAY ENTERS THE ROOM FROM HIS BEDROOM AND APPEARS IN A HURRY. HE COLLECTS KEYS AND VARIOUS ITEMS FROM THE ROOM AND LOOKS AT PAUL).

RAY: Get moving, Paul. Get ahead of the rush. Come on!

(PAUL STIRS AWAKE AND NODS. RAY MOVES HURRIDLY BACK INTO HIS BEDROOM, PASSING RENE ON THE WAY. SHE SMILES AT HIM AND HE GRINS BACK AS HE PASSES. RENE MOVES INTO THE KITCHEN AND SMILES AT PAUL. SHE RUBS HIS HEAD AFFECTIONATLY AS SHE MOVES TO THE BOX. SHE PRESSES THE RED BUTTON AND WAITS.)

RENE: Ready for breakfast, Ray?

(HE NODS AND TRIES TO GET BACK TO SLEEP.)

BOX: Identification? (SHE TYPES IN HER FIVE-DIGIT NUMBER.)

BOX: Please wait. (AFTER A DELAY) What is your requirement?

RENE: Cook breakfast.

BOX: (AFTER A DELAY) Granted.

(RENE BEGINS TO PREPARE THE FOOD.)

MOTHER: (OFF) Rene? Rene?

RENE: Coming, Mother.

(SHE EXITS TO THE BEDROOMS WITH AN EXHAUSTED LOOK ON HER FACE. RAY RETURNS WITH HIS COAT ON AND GENTLY TAPS PAUL ON THE HEAD TO WAKE HIM UP.)

RAY: Come on. Get moving, will you. It's getting late. (PAUL SITS UP AS RAY MOVES TO THE BOX AND PRESSES THE RED BUTTON.)

BOX: Identification? (RAY TAPS IN HIS 5-DIGIT NUMBER). Please wait. (AFTER A DELAY) What is your requirement?

RAY: Travel to work.

BOX: (AFTER A PAUSE) Granted.

RAY: Where's mum?

PAUL: Er...looking after Gran.

RAY: (RAISING EYES SKYWARD). Already? So early! Tell her I've left, okay? (PAUL NODS). And get going...

PAUL: All right! Have you had breakfast, Dad?

RAY: (SMILING) No. I'll get something once I get to work. (PAUL NODS AND EXITS)

(RAY EXITS THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR, JUST AS DANA WALKS THROUGH THE ROOM TO HER BEDROOM, DRESSED IN A TOWEL - STRAIGHT FROM THE SHOWER.)

DANA: Bye, Dad.

(RENE ENTERS. SHE NOTICES RAY HAS GONE AND CONTINUES MAKING THE BREAKFAST.)

RENE: Come on sleepy head. Time for school. (SHE TAPS HIM ON THE HEAD TO WAKE HIM UP.) Put the TV on.

PAUL: (WEARILY) Must I? You do it.

RENE: Just do it!

PAUL: Why do we have to go through all this palaver? Every time! (HE SLOWLY GETS UP AND PRESSES THE RED BUTTON)

BOX: Identification? (HE RELUCTANTLY TYPES IN HIS SIX-DIGIT NUMBER.) Please wait. (AFTER A DELAY) What is your requirement?

PAUL: TV.

BOX: (AFTER A PAUSE) Granted.

(PAUL MOVES TO THE TV AND TURNS IT ON. THE KITCHEN IS LIT BY FLICKERING IMAGES AND THE SOUND IS TURNED LOW.)

PAUL: All this effort, just to turn on the TV.

RENE: You know why. Economies.

PAUL: Rubbish. What economies?

RENE: Let's not start all this again shall we. We've been through.....

PAUL: I don't believe it.

(DANA ENTERS DRYING HER HAIR)

RENE: Just accept it as part of our lives, okay? We're stuck with it and that's that. Breakfast in a few minutes, get ready.

DANA: What're we stuck with now?

PAUL: (DRAGGING HIMSELF TO HIS BEDROOM) The same old, same old.

DANA: What?

PAUL: (AS HE EXITS) The damn box.

RENE: (SETS THE TABLE FOR BREAKFAST) The same questioning. I'm getting very tired of it?

DANA: (SITS) Of what, the questioning, or trying to justify it?

RENE: (HESITATES) Both, actually.

DANA: Well...you know he's right.

RENE: He's not. Don't YOU start. You know the reason we all have to have a box.

DANA: I know why YOU think we have to have a box. I don't agree with you either.

RENE: Tough. We've no choice.

DANA: Of course we do. We just don't use it.

RENE: (SHE STOPS AND GASPS IN AMAZEMENT) Don't even say that in jest. You have no idea what would happen if you did that.....

DANA: Yes I do. Nothing.

RENE: (FLUSTERED) Enough. Get ready for work. I must....see to mother (SHE EXITS QUICKLY.)

DANA: (STANDS AND EXITS TOO, GLARING AT THE BOX.) But he IS right, mother. (EMPTY STAGE.)

(LIGHTS FADE TO SHOW PASSING OF TIME)

SCENE 2. EVENING – ONE WEEK LATER

(THE FAMILY ARE SITTING AT THE DINNING TABLE AFTER AN EVENING MEAL. RENE ENTERS AND JOINS THEM.)

RAY: She all right?

RENE: Sleeping now. What've I missed?

RAY: Wonder son here, is rebelling against our way of life. Again!

PAUL: Just the using of the box!

DANA: And I agree with him.

RAY: And she's agreeing with him.

RENE: Kids! Huh! I used to rebel to. (THE KIDS LOOK AT HER IN AMAZEMENT)

PAUL: You!

RENE: Sure. We all did. Didn't do any good though. Things are what they are. I used to walk with my shoes untied. Of course it wasn't comfortable, or practical, but it wasn't the NORM. Rebellion is part of growing. But the way we live is not based on rules just for rules sake, or enforced to annoy anyone. It's often a lifetime of mistakes learnt and corrected. Only you youngsters haven't had the learning process yet.

PAUL: The box is a fake. You're all being conned. Can't you see that? You're so....conditioned, you don't question it any more.

RENE: Oh....I questioned it. The punishment for abusing the system is very swift and harsh.

PAUL: I can't accept the arguments for it. I just don't believe you.

RAY: We had a leaflet. It was a very detailed list of what was what. It's still here somewhere. (HE BEGINS TO LOOK FOR IT)

RENE: What you don't realise, because you haven't had to live through it, is that this country is so overcrowded, the authorities can no longer guarantee to deliver even the most basic of services. Say we've now 100 million people in the country. This means that most