

PHONE ARTS

A short play in one act

by L.B. HAMILTON

CHARACTERS

JANE A woman of color and homemaker, with a part-time job

MOIRA An artist and Jane's partner for 7 years

PLACE

An urban apartment

Note: If a sculptural piece cannot be found, an abstract drawing or painting can be substituted, then Jane's line on page 6 "There's more to art than a lopsided hunk of clay pretending to be a woman fucking a phone." would change to "There's more to art than a bunch of goo (or scribbles) pretending to be a woman fucking a phone."

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PHONE ARTS

(JANE speaks into a phone as she examines, then carefully cuts a newly baked peach pie. When she speaks, she has a syrupy Southern accent - but only when she speaks into the phone.)

JANE

Mmmm. It's even better than last week . . . No, I'm not lying . . . Now, why would Salome lie to you? I swear by my baby blue eyes that Salome likes you best, Sugar. . . You are? Oooh, I wish I could see. Just how big is "big" Sugar? Mmm. I don't think I ever knew anybody ever near that -- Uh huhn? Well, we'll just have to call you "Big Daddy" from now on, won't we?

(MOIRE enters carrying an object wrapped in cloth, she stops and takes in what JANE's doing.)

Mmmm. Say that again, Sugar, it makes Salome wanna eat you up, starting with your toes.... all the way up to your big, sweet --

(MOIRE clears her throat. JANE jumps and turns.)

Jesus! *(beat)* Jesus I can see it now, Sugar. It's all you said it would be. --- Uh huhn? Mmmm. Tell me, Lover. Tell me everything you do, everything..

(MOIRE begins to flounce into the bedroom.)

Stop! *(To phone)* No...Don't stop, Sugar. Talk to me. *(To MOIRE)* It's not what you think. *(To phone.)* It's better than you think. God yes. Uh huhn. More .. .don't stop.

(MOIRE walks up to JANE and begins to speak, JANE pulls her close; gives her a very intimate kiss. MOIRE struggles.)

Mmmm. Uh huhn. More Don't stop *(to MOIRE)* Stay with me, Baby.

(MOIRE struggles. JANE hangs on and speaks to the caller and MOIRE at the same time.)

Don't back off now, Baby. I have sweet peaches just for you.

(JANE sensually slides a slice of peach into MOIRA's mouth, who surrenders, struggles and surrenders again.)

No, don't say anything, Sugar...just enjoy. Mmm. That's the sweetest stuff, Baby...and it's all yours ... That's it! Oh yes, oh yes, Baby. Enjoy it....close your eyes and taste that peach.. . . See? Isn't that good, Sugar? It's all yours, 'cause little o' Salome knows how much you love my peaches. So moist and soft and sweet and warm. Mmmm.

(MOIRE breaks away and stomps into the bedroom. JANE tries to follow, stretching the phone cord until it stops her progress.)

Damn it! *(catching herself)* Oh you're good. Come on, Baby. Come on. I feel it. In - out, In - out, Faster baby. Faster! I want it now. Right now....

(A crash from the bedroom. JANE covers the phone and whispers loudly)

JANE

That better not be the new marble, Moire. I'm not buying you any more marble!
(To Phone) That's it...that's it! Yes, yes, oh, God, oh God, oh God. I can't take it anymore. Stay with me, Sugar...Stay with me! Now...now! NOW, damnit! Oh, Baby. Oh my. You've just plain worn me out. . . . Sure, Honey, sure. You call again . . . anytime. Make it soon, okay? Just make sure you all ask for Salome, you hear? Okay, Sugar. Bye, bye. Uh huhn...bye bye now....Yeah, yeah. Bye!
(She quickly hangs up. Sound of crashes from the next room.)

JANE, cont.

Moire? Honey? I thought you had a meeting at the gallery. Why are you back so early? Did things go bad again? *(pause)* Look, we need to talk. Moire, Honey? I know I said I'd quit but . . . Hell, Moire, they're only men.
(MOIRE finally appears from the bedroom, holding clay in her hand.)

MOIRE

Oh God, Jane . . I'm so sorry. I don't know what I was thinking. But since they're only men . . .that makes everything different. Doesn't it -- "Salome?"
(MOIRE throws the clay at JANE and flounces back to the bedroom)

JANE

I meant it's only a job!
(MOIRE returns holding an odd shaped sculpture of a woman straddling a large phone receiver and raises it as if to throw.)
Sweetie? I have some Hagen Daz for the pie.

MOIRE

Why do you keep doing that?

JANE

What's wrong? Didn't Chloe like your new piece?

MOIRE

Janey answer me.

JANE

You got rejected again, didn't you, Baby?.

MOIRE

You . . ! *(beat)* Stop that. We're talking about the job.

JANE

Well, it's really more than that. You want French Vanilla, or Praline?
(MOIRE raises the sculpture above her head in a threat)
Sweetie, think! That's your favorite piece. You'll only hurt yourself.

MOIRE

I have a meeting at a new gallery in exactly one-half hour, I don't have time for--

JANE

That was my birthday present!

MOIRE

You're right..
(She puts down the sculpture and picks up the pie to throw.)

JANE

Baby...Baby! I did what I promised. I quit 1-900-HOT TALK!
(JANE gently takes the pie from MOIRE.)
This is 1-900-WHISPER.

MOIRE

I think you missed the essence of our agreement.

JANE

It's my own Company, Sweetie! *(pause)* Surprised?

MOIRE

How stupid can you be?

JANE

I've made a discovery, Sweetheart and -- Did you just call me stupid?

MOIRE

What happened to WallMart?

JANE

Does Chloe think that I'm stu--

MOIRE

What happened to WallMart, damn it!
(The phone rings. MOIRE & JANE leap at it.)
Hello! *(listening)* You want me to what? Uh huhn.... Uh huhn. What's your name, Sir? Mr. X? Well, guess what Mr. X.? You've got the wrong

number. Salome's not going to suck your insignificant little cock today, how do you like that? ... What? No, Mr. X., I don't want you to beg, I want you to hang up, and then I want you to get a goddamn life!

(She slams down the phone.)

Just how much longer do you intend degrading us like this?

(She sets down the statue and heads to the pie and stares at it, then angrily takes a bite.)

JANE

As opposed to pricing blenders and being a teeny pebble in a great big corporate wheel, while you hang out with Chloe and all your chic little arty friends and--

MOIRE

You're mixing metaphors again.

JANE

Well, excuse me.

MOIRE

Look, Jane . . .I. . .Damn it, can we talk about this later, I've got to get to the --

JANE

I only ever see you in bed anymore.

MOIRE

We talk.

JANE

You sleep.

MOIRE

I'm relaxing - not sleeping.

JANE

Well, you better get your sinuses checked, Honey, 'cause you snore when you relax.

MOIRE

Do you understand what it takes for me to create? The energy...the mortification of rejection -- the.... I can't produce true art in a volatile environment.

JANE

There's more to art than a lopsided hunk of clay pretending to be a woman fucking a phone.

(Silence. MOIRE is deeply shaken by this comment.)

MOIRE

You're saying I have no talent?

JANE

I'm just saying, I'm finally finding out what art's really abo--

MOIRE

You might have told me seven years ago that you didn't think I have talent.

JANE

Seven years ago I hadn't spent seven years supporting your little hobby.

MOIRE

I happen to be the recipient of a Steenberg Foundation Most Promising Artist Award!

JANE

That was eight years ago.

MOIRE

Why am I'm defending my art to someone who spends her days listening to dirty old men pant?

JANE

So just how much did you make on your last sale, Darling?

MOIRE

Ah, the cruelty begins.

JANE

Mr. X's panting paid last month's rent.

MOIRE

What?

JANE

And those two-dozen long stemmed roses for our anniversary? They didn't come from Walmart, Lover. 1-900- WHISPER is a gold mine - much better than HOT TA--

MOIRE

Our anniversary was five months ago.
(The phone rings again.)

JANE

Ummm. You never told me - Vanilla or Praline?
(MOIRE moves to the phone, JANE picks it up then hangs it up.)

MOIRE

You wanted to be my muse - you wanted to be the inspiration behind the --

JANE

It was love - people say crazy things when--

MOIRE

Oh God. Last year you're begging for us to have a family and now you don't even love me?

JANE

I do want a family with you, Moire. But --

MOIRE

And just what's Moire, Jr. going to be doing while you're jacking off Mr's. X , Y, and Z?

JANE

Why not Jane, Jr.?

MOIRE

I was being pithy.

JANE

I'm sorry. Somewhere between cleaning the oven, hand washing your undies and being stupid, I missed that word.

MOIRE

Epigrammatic.

JANE

(beat) Fuck you. And fuck all your pithy friends and fuck Chloe!

MOIRE

Exactly when did this obsession with Chloe start? *(pause)* Jane?

JANE

About... six months ago?

MOIRE

Oh. *(beat)* Well, stop it.

JANE

About the time you started coming home late and being too tired to make love and all.

MOIRE

I explained that . . .

JANE

About the time I saw you and the Divine Chloe about to dive for oysters in your studio. *(silence)* Yeah. Right then I asked myself, how the hell does a Jane compete with a Chloe?

MOIRE

It was . . . I . . . Look, nothing really happened. You misunderstoo--

JANE

And Jane couldn't. Not really. 'Cause Jane's just a regular type person, right?

MOIRE

Chloe wanted to. . well... but I couldn't . . .

JANE

And I'm thinking, Chloe's got the clothes, and the body, and the connections, right?

MOIRE

One stupid, heated moment, Jane. That's all.

JANE

So one day, I'm baking myself sick, and I'm looking at this statue here. Thinking about WallMart and the seven-year itch and how good Chloe looks in her size 2 black dresses and her pouty lips. Suddenly the statue starts speaking to me and - like I finally begin to understand, you know? Communication, art, passion, it's all mix up together, right? That's what Chloe and Moire have that Jane and Moire don't have. And that's when it hits - the statue - the phone - my voice - talent! I have a talent too! I can be creative!

MOIRE

I realize you were hurt by what you thought you saw, but ...

JANE

Yeah, yeah. Anyway, then the power . . .the power of art finally begins to make sense.

MOIRE

The pain you must have felt . . . I'll never forgive myself.

JANE

It's fine, Moire. Chloe gave you what I couldn't. But now ... now we finally have something in common.

MOIRE

Jane! It's over. Long over.

JANE

Long over?

MOIRE

I'm a one woman, woman.

JANE

Oh...

MOIRE

Sweetheart. I just can't do that to you.

JANE

Oh?

MOIRE

Come here. Come here, Silly. Look at me. Is this the face of an adulteress? Is it? No. All better? Promise? That's my girl. Now call the damn phone company, or whoever and stop this craziness. Okay? *(pause)* What's the matter?

JANE

I can't. Listen, Moire. . . I'm good. I found my path. I am a performance artist!

MOIRE

(beat) Where's the Hagen Daz?

JANE

I have instincts, Sweetie. And a following. I know what they need even when they don't. I can talk whole new worlds for them and take them where they never knew they could go. I can make them laugh; I can make them cry; and they are in a big new place and are...are... transformed. And they come back for more - it's a built-in market with huge return business! And they don't have to dress up and go somewhere and hang out with a bunch of snooty strangers to find art - No...it's right there, at their fingertips. And my art can't be stolen from them and it won't be ruined by time, or lose value, because mine is a living art - always...always... um...reinventing itself! Yeah! Powerful and, and... um...and empowering!

MOIRE

That's not art -

JANE

Of course it is. In your face, real...um...audiophonic! Yeah! Audiophonic art. Oh think about it, Sweetie. We could branch out. Make a fortune, buy a house - have that baby? AND you won't have to worry about critics!

MOIRE

Me? Oh, no! Uhn uhn!

JANE

Sweetie. I need you. You're my muse, now! *(pause)* Wow, my shift's just about up. I've got to meet with my accountant. Do you think you can throw something together for dinner?

MOIRE

I don't cook.

JANE

We have three cookbooks, you'll be fine.

(Kissing MOIRE)

Thanks. Thanks for opening all those doors for me, Love.

(She gathers her things. The phone rings. MOIRE stares at it.)

Answer it, Sweetie.

MOIRE

I . .it's -- it's perverted.

JANE

It's Postmodern! Go on . . . you can do it. *(Beat)* Please? *(beat)* For me? *(beat)*
For the baby?

(MOIRE struggles, then gingerly picks up the phone. JANE cuddles close to listen and whisper instructions.)

MOIRE

Hello?.... What? Oh... . uh, this is .. my name is -- Peaches. *(listens)* What?!

(She covers the phone and whispers.)

I can't do this.

(JANE nods encouragement and starts nibbling MOIRE's neck.)

Mmm. Uh, sure . . .I'm alone. Uh, so . . . ummm.

(JANE whispers in MOIRE's ear and pushes her into a chair.)

Tell me . . . what are you wearing?

(JANE begins to stroke MOIRE's breast)

Ohhh, I like that . . Uh huhn.

(The women smile at each other and JANE begins to sink to her knees.)

Tell me more. Lot's more.

(She continues to moan as the Lights Fade.)

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