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Dramatic Publishing

An Earthquake

by
Lisa Soland

From...

35 in 10

Thirty-Five Ten-Minute Plays

Compiled and Edited

KENT R. BROWN

This excerpt contains strong language.



Dramatic Publishing

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AN EARTHQUAKE

By
Lisa Soland

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An Earthquake was first produced in 1992 at the Chandler Theatre in North Hollywood, Calif., by The Faculty Actor/Playwright Company as part of an evening of originals works entitled “Words, Words! Words!” It was directed by Charles Nelson Reilly, and featured Pepper Sweeney and Lisa Soland.

CHARACTERS

KATHY: A 25-year-old attractive, friendly young woman who has lived in this Los Angeles apartment complex for almost five years.

STEVEN: A “raw and natural” 29-year-old small-town man who has just moved to the city.

SETTING: In front of a small apartment complex in Los Angeles. The stage is bare except for a doorframe with a sign that reads “Apartments 1-10.”

TIME: The morning.

AN EARTHQUAKE

AT THE CURTAIN: *There are rumbling sounds. LIGHTS come up on a trembling doorframe and swinging sign. A woman enters barefoot, wearing only an oversize T-shirt that reads, "Happy Birthday, Baby." She braces her body in the rocking doorframe and counts to herself. An excited young man, also barefoot, runs through the doorframe, wearing nothing but boxer shorts.*

HIM. Holy shit!

HER. Are you okay?

HIM. Yeah. Man alive! What a rocker!

HER. That was a big one. I could feel it right through my body! Twenty seconds max. I always count them out in my head while they're happening.

HIM. Shit. Incredible.

HER. Was that your first?

HIM. Yeah.

HER. Oh, that's great. I wish it were mine.

HIM. That's really something!

HER. Isn't it?

HIM. Yeah! I never thought it would be like that!

HER. They're pretty powerful.

HIM. The building's pretty solid though, huh?

HER. Oh, yeah. I've lived here four and a half years and it's pulled me through every one of them. I just wish there was some way you could tell when they were coming. Mrs. Penelope in apartment six used to have

this cat named Shirley that would go nuts just before an earthquake but a pot fell on her head and that was that.

HIM. On Mrs. Penelope?

HER. Oh my God, no. The cat. *(Beat.)* Shirley.

HIM. Shirley.

HER. Yeah. Are you my new neighbor?

HIM. Yeah. Steven.

HER. Kathy. Nice to meet you.

(They shake hands.)

STEVEN. Nice shirt.

KATHY. Nice shorts.

STEVEN *(looking down)*. Oh God. I was sleeping.

KATHY. Me too.

STEVEN. Better than an alarm clock.

KATHY. I'm still shaking.

STEVEN. After four and a half years?

KATHY. Yup. I still shake. I sit straight up in bed and wait. I always do that. I wait and watch to see if it's going to get worse. Then I count, and when I get past ten, I run for the door brace.

STEVEN. Door brace? Is that what you're supposed to do? *(Examining the door brace.)*

KATHY. I don't know. They change their minds every year. Kinda like how many eggs you should eat in a week.

STEVEN. What's that down to?

KATHY. I don't care. I eat 'em when I want. I bet that was six.

STEVEN *(a bit lost)*. Eggs?

KATHY. No. Six on the Richter.

STEVEN. Richter.