

VENT

A quarantine scene by Nicholas Priore

For Doug Rossi and Patricia Bosworth

*NYC Hospital. 2020. The sound of one ventilator and two heart monitors beeping. Two people are hooked up to one ventilator. One is an older black man of about 60 or so by the name of DOUGLAS, and the other is a young white woman named PATRICIA. She is ill and short of breath, but not nearly as badly as he is...she still has a sense of hope, while he can barely breathe. They are both wheezing between lines, but he already has the death rattle...suggested run time, just under ten minutes.*

PATRICIA

Welp...looks like we're ventilator buddies.

DOUGLAS

.....Pardon?

PATRICIA

Looks as though...the state of New York...has adopted a sort of buddy system...when it comes to vent...

DOUGLAS

I can't breathe.

PATRICIA

Neither can I.

DOUGLAS

You can talk.

PATRICIA

Oh am I...am I bothering you?

DOUGLAS

.....Just a bit.

PATRICIA

I wouldn't be here if I did...if I didn't need to be.

DOUGLAS

Sure.

PATRICIA

.....Smoker?

DOUGLAS  
Pardon?

PATRICIA  
You smoke?

DOUGLAS  
.....Got one?

PATRICIA  
No I don't.

DOUGLAS  
.....Family?

PATRICIA  
You're asking if I have a family?

DOUGLAS  
Yes.

PATRICIA  
Are you suddenly interested or are.....are you you scrutinizing my value in the...world...my  
vent...ilator...ent...entitlement.

DOUGLAS  
I want my wife.

PATRICIA  
Yea, so...so where is she.....oh, right...no visitors...sorry.....No kid?

DOUGLAS  
No.....You?

PATRICIA  
Neither.

DOUGLAS  
.....Grandson.

PATRICIA  
You have a grandson? How does that work?

DOUGLAS  
I'm sixty...I have a son...he is not a kid...but his boy is.

PATRICIA

Well I just turned thirty so...so there...so there's plenty of time.

DOUGLAS  
Not for us.

PATRICIA  
What?

DOUGLAS  
This.....doesn't turn back...not from here...

PATRICIA  
Point of no...no return you mean?

DOUGLAS  
You got it.

PATRICIA  
.....What're you a doctor?

DOUGLAS  
Yes.

PATRICIA  
Oh.....well I work in medical too, so...

DOUGLAS  
In what?

PATRICIA  
Derm.

*He laughs and starts hacking.*

That's funny?

DOUGLAS  
Pardon.....Nurse?

PATRICIA  
Medical es...thetician

*He laughs again and hacks even harder.*

Oh *fuck off* then.

*She hacks as well.*

DOUGLAS  
Sorry...but you don't often...come off a vent...

PATRICIA  
Bullshit...maybe you won't...but I will walk out...of here...and when...I do...I'll be glad to return  
my...return my...half of this vent...

*She interrupts herself with an awful coughing fit.*

DOUGLAS  
You need...to stop.

PATRICIA  
What?

DOUGLAS  
Talk...talking.

PATRICIA  
Still annoyed?

DOUGLAS  
No.

PATRICIA  
Oh...

DOUGLAS  
Just.....save...your breath.

PATRICIA  
Okay look, I got about as much....capacity for this...for this...passive aggressive assessment of our...need  
for a vent...ilator ...as you do...I am...just choosing to fight.

DOUGLAS  
With whom?

PATRICIA  
Not with you...even I don't...have the energy for it...

DOUGLAS  
You're only...fighting your.....self...

DANIELE  
.....What's you're name...

DOUGLAS  
Doug...Douglas...

PATRICIA

Well Doug...Douglas.....If you're right, and I'm not.....and you're not.....then we can't t...urn on one another...I don't want your last breath spent on pettiness...or mine.....but I refuse to accept...

DOUGLAS

Just stop.

PATRICIA

.....What's your wife's name.

DOUGLAS

I never said.....I had one...

PATRICIA

You had one?

DOUGLAS

No...I mean...yes, but...

PATRICIA

I'm sorry...

DOUGLAS

.....Don't be...

PATRICIA

.....Dead or...

DOUGLAS

I cant...right now...

PATRICIA

Oh, was it recent?

DOUGLAS

No, I.....it's not that.....I just can't....

PATRICIA

Oh.....

DOUGLAS

I can't breathe...I'm so...sorry, I...seem to be suff....suffoc (hacking)...suffocating.

PATRICIA

No, you're not...

DOUGLAS

I am.....and so are you.

PATRICIA  
Don't say that.

DOUGLAS  
.....Why not?

PATRICIA  
Is that you bedside man...manner...

DOUGLAS  
It's my death bed man...ner...

PATRICIA  
.....I can't...I can't imagine any...thing worse.

DOUGLAS  
It's worse...than you...can imagine...I never...never feared dying...but I saw the proc...process...that was my on...ly fear...slowly...losing...my br...eath...and never...catching it...again...

PATRICIA  
.....I thought...this was just for the elderly.

DOUGLAS  
Wipe us out...to...make room for more?

PATRICIA  
You had time...twice my time...

DOUGLAS  
You may...be...thirty years younger...but you're only thr...three days...behind me.

PATRICIA  
Stop.

DOUGLAS  
I won't be...long...and you can...have this vent...ilator...all...to your...self...when I'm...I'm through.

*Long silence. The sound of the ventilator and heart monitors.*

PATRICIA  
.....Is this okay?

DOUGLAS  
No.

PATRICIA

I mean sharing.

DOUGLAS  
None...of this...is...

PATRICIA  
But...

DOUGLAS  
...okay...and it won't be...

PATRICIA  
...but...

DOUGLAS  
...not for us...

PATRICIA  
STOP IT! (Coughs and gags) No won...no wonder you're dying....with that attitude.

DOUGLAS  
Attitude has no...

PATRICIA  
Positive vibes.

*He laughs and hacks.*

I'm not listening to this...if you're gonna die then go on and die, because I'm here to recover, you hear me! (Crying) I AM A FUCKING HEALTH NUT! I DESERVE TO LIVE (Coughing and hacking) I tried...I tried...to be good all my life...why me, why this...

DOUGLAS  
Why not you...why not...this...we all...have to suffer...suffocate...and die.

PATRICIA  
NOT NOW!

DOUGLAS  
Then when...

PATRICIA  
AAAAHHHHHHHHH I HATE YOOOOUUUUU AHHHHHHHHH!!!! (coughing and hacking and without breath) sor...sorry...I don't...hate...anyone...but myss...self.....I jus.....just needed to...to vent...

DOUGLAS  
...Till later...

PATRICIA  
What?

DOUGLAS  
...until later...

PATRICIA  
.....Later?

DOUGLAS  
...only until later, my dear...

PATRICIA  
Sshhh...sh...sh...shhh...we'll talk...later...shhhh...talk later...it's okay...

DOUGLAS  
I can...I can...

PATRICIA  
Shh I know...I know you...you can, but...

DOUGLAS  
I can...I can't...I can't breathe.....

PATRICIA  
Okay, don't panic...take a...a deep breath...no, sorr...sorry, that used to work...

DOUGLAS  
I...I...I love you...

PATRICIA  
.....What?

DOUGLAS  
I love you....Patricia...

PATRICIA  
How do...do you know my...

DOUGLAS  
I'm on my way, Patti.....

PATRICIA  
.....Was that her name?

DOUGLAS  
I can.....I can't.....I can't breathe...



*DOUGLAS suffocates as PATRICIA can do nothing but listen...this should occur at eight minutes and forty-six seconds in...*

PATRICIA

Me.....me.....me neither...(wondering where anyone is, trying to call for help)...hel...hel....helllllll.....

*She hacks as as her head falls back, unable to support it, looking up the ceiling...*

(Panting yet breathless) I can...I can...I can't.....where...where...are you...

*She sinks into breathless suffering and silence, to the sound of one ventilator and now one heart monitor still beeping and the other having flatlined...*