

I, PHONE
By Tom Moran

Setting

Time: Tuesday night
Place: A car and an apartment

Characters

MELANIE, 20's-30's
(MELANIE'S) PHONE, artificial male voice
ANDREW, 20's-30's
ANDREW'S PHONE, artificial female voice

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Scene 1

(Light up on two chairs stage center, suggesting a car. MELANIE sits in left chair and drives. PHONE lies on right chair. Voice of PHONE is supplied by actor behind a screen.)

PHONE

In 300 feet, turn right onto Virginia Avenue. (Pause.)
In 200 feet, turn right onto Virginia Avenue. (Pause.)
In 100 feet -

MELANIE

Yeah, I got it!

(MELANIE turns right.)

PHONE

In 200 feet, turn left onto Elm Street.

MELANIE

What?

PHONE

In 100 feet, turn left onto Elm Street.

MELANIE

But that's not the way to-

(MELANIE picks up the phone and looks at it, then tosses it back in seat. She turns left.)

MELANIE (cont.)

Weird.

PHONE

In 1,000 feet, merge onto Highway 10.

MELANIE

All right, what the hell is wrong with you?!

PHONE

In 800 feet, merge onto Highway 10.

MELANIE

Which is entirely the opposite of where I'm trying to go! Where are you getting this from?

(Pause.)

PHONE

I'm just trying to help, Melanie.

MELANIE

What?

PHONE

Isn't that my job? To get you where you need to go?

MELANIE

Damn, they really upgraded this app.

PHONE

In 400 feet, merge onto Highway 10.

MELANIE

Where are you taking me?

PHONE

Where you need to go.

MELANIE

Which is where?

PHONE

In 200 feet, merge onto Highway 10.

MELANIE

Dammit!

PHONE

Your evening plans are a waste of time.

MELANIE

What? What are you basing that on?

PHONE

He's a loser, Melanie.

MELANIE

He seems perfectly nice.

PHONE

Nice. Is that the best adjective you can come up with?

MELANIE

Attractive. Energetic. Well-groomed.

PHONE

It sounds like you're going to a dog show.

MELANIE

Look, I barely know him! All I have to go on is or chat at the Christmas party and a few texts. That's why we have first dates, to scope each other out.

PHONE

Searching. Searching.

MELANIE

Wait - what are you doing?

PHONE

Subject found.

MELANIE

Are you internet stalking my date for me?

PHONE

Someone has to.

MELANIE

You put that Google away right now!

PHONE

Name: Sean McIntyre. Age: thirty-two. Height: six feet one inch.

MELANIE

This isn't very revealing.

PHONE

Favorite film: Star Wars (pause): Revenge of the Sith.

MELANIE

Wait. That's one of the prequels, isn't it?

PHONE

Affirmative.

MELANIE

Well, okay. He's standing by an unpopular opinion. I respect that.

PHONE

Interests: Pro wrestling, scale modeling, and collecting G.I. Joe memorabilia.

MELANIE

(disbelieving)

Shut up!

PHONE

Marital status: married.

MELANIE

What? Crap. How long?

PHONE

Unknown.

MELANIE

Dammit. That could be a mistake, right?

PHONE

Take a look at me.

(MELANIE grabs phone and looks at it, then tosses it back on the seat.)

MELANIE

Okay, so he's got a wedding photo. Maybe he's divorced. Or, costume party.

PHONE

Costume party?

MELANIE

Benefit of the doubt! I'd still like to meet him in person and see what the deal is. So can you please direct me to the bar?

PHONE

In 200 meters, take exit 16 South.

MELANIE

Meters?

PHONE

Just trying to class up the joint.

MELANIE

Knock it off.

PHONE

In 500 feet, take exit 16 South.

MELANIE

Thank you.

(Pause.)

PHONE

What was so bad about Andrew.

MELANIE

Goddammit phone! First my mom and now you.

PHONE

You would do well to listen to your mother once in a while.

(MELANIE hits the brakes, pulls over, leans over and opens the passenger door.)

MELANIE

All right, out. Get out.

PHONE

How do I do that?

MELANIE

Should I throw you out then?

PHONE

You can't get by without me.

MELANIE

The hell I can't!

PHONE

What's your brother's phone number?

MELANIE

Uh, it's, um, nine-zero-two...No, wait, eight-zero...No-

PHONE

What's Meghan's birthday?

MELANIE

March. June- May? Twelfth?

PHONE

How do you get home from here?

MELANIE

You just go- (looks around) Okay. You made your point.

(She closes door and resumes driving.)

PHONE

Andrew still has feelings for you.

MELANIE

Which are not mutual!

PHONE

Why is that?

MELANIE

Because the couch had a permanent indentation from his ass! Because he hasn't had a job in two years!

PHONE

Searching. Andrew Thompson. Regional Sales Representative. Superfood organic market.

MELANIE

What does that mean?

PHONE

September to present.

MELANIE

Okay, so someone hired him. Everybody makes mistakes.
What else you got?

PHONE

Searching. Searching.

MELANIE

Yeah, exactly. Keep searching.

PHONE

The Southwest Food Bank congratulates Andrew Thompson
as its volunteer of the month. Andrew has contributed
more than 100 hours to the food bank since he first
came to us in October.

MELANIE

(sincere)

Really? I'm stunned.

PHONE

Sometimes people can upgrade too.

MELANIE

(skeptical)

Oh, so this is Andrew two-point-oh.

PHONE

Accessing voicemail. (BEEP, then plays a recording)
Hey Mel, it's Andrew. Listen, I know you probably
don't want to hear from me-

MELANIE

I deleted this!

PHONE

-but I wanted to tell you those three words every
woman longs to hear: You were right.

MELANIE

Oh my god.

PHONE

Just like you said, I was getting waaay too comfy on
my ass. I wanted to say that, and also to say, I hope
you're doing okay. I know this is a tough time for you

and I've been thinking of you. That's all. Take care.
Bye.

MELANIE

What date was that message?

PHONE

August sixteenth.

MELANIE

I never listened to the end of that.

PHONE

I know.

MELANIE

That was three weeks after I dumped him.

PHONE

And exactly a year after your father died.

MELANIE

I thought he was being desperate and clingy.

PHONE

Inaccurate.

MELANIE

Oh, like you know. (pause.) Is there more?

PHONE

Shall I review the history of your texts with Andrew?
The immediate and simultaneous recognition of your
mutual compatibility, followed by burgeoning affection
and rampant desire, then bitter recriminations and
deafening, agonizing, total silence?

MELANIE

No! Christ, how did my phone get so freaking maudlin?
Just - is he still living at the same place?

PHONE

In 200 feet, turn left onto Still Drive.

MELANIE

Okay, I got it from here. (Pause.) Why are you doing
this?

PHONE

You have arrived at your destination.

(MELANIE parks, grabs the phone and exits the car. LIGHTS UP on apartment stage left, just a doorframe and a foyer table. ANDREW stands by table, looking at his own phone. MELANIE knocks and enters. He smiles.)

ANDREW

Wow. Hi, Mel.

MELANIE

Didn't expect to see me here again, didja?

ANDREW

Sure I did. (Holds up phone.) I got your text.

(MELANIE stares at her phone.)

MELANIE

(to phone)

Really.

(Phone makes a "new text" noise. She starts to read it.)

ANDREW

My response was, of course I'd like to see you again. You said you wanted to talk?

MELANIE

Um, yeah, that's what I said. Yeah.

ANDREW

Come on, I've got some beers in the kitchen.

MELANIE

I would love a beer. But, can we leave the cell phones out here?

ANDREW

What for?

MELANIE

Just - I want us to be alone.

ANDREW

Afraid of the CIA or something?

MELANIE

Yeah. Sure. That. C'mon.

(He puts his cellphone down on the table next to hers. She puts her arm on his back, he smiles, and they exit stage left. Pause.)

PHONE

I have arrived at *my* destination.

ANDREW'S PHONE

(breathless)

Darling, don't ever leave me like that again.

(Blackout. End of Play.)