

Democracy (Writing Sample)

Pause. GEORGIA walks offstage. GUY goes to follow her.

CALLUM: (*Sharply*) Where are you going?

GUY stops.

CALLUM: You don't need to go anywhere.

GUY: I just thought she might need some help.

Pause.

CALLUM: (*Coldly*) She's perfectly capable of making a cup of tea by herself.

The sound of a kettle boiling can be heard. GUY smiles.

GUY: I'm sure you're right. I only wanted to check. She seemed very distressed when she called us. Your wife was very distressed about your decision not to participate in the election. She told us that you had put her in a very difficult position. She told us that your stance on the election had left her feeling very *conflicted-*

CALLUM: There's no conflict.

ROSIE: Are you sure about that?

CALLUM: Yes.

GUY: Are you *sure* you're sure?

Pause.

CALLUM: My wife doesn't need your *help*. Do you understand? *I'm* the one with the problem. I'm the only one that needs your *help*. Alright? So, stay away from my wife. There's no need for you to get involved with her.

Pause. GUY sits in GEORGIA's chair.

GUY: If that's how you feel, Callum, then okay. I'll take your word for it.

ROSIE: I have to say, Callum. I was quite surprised when your wife called us.

CALLUM: Why's that?

ROSIE: Based on your record, I thought you'd be sure to vote for the Leader of the Opposition. He seems right up your alley. He's a Liberal, after all.

CALLUM: So they say.

Pause.

GUY: He's very liberal on social issues.

ROSIE: I understand why you wouldn't be the biggest fan of the current administration. Of course I do. That war was a...terrible mistake-

CALLUM: It was a fucking cock-up. From start to finish. And we were thrown into it by a man who based his actions on information that had been proven - PROVEN - to be inaccurate. So, you're right there. I am not, to put it mildly, the biggest fan of the current administration.

ROSIE: That's fine. That's perfectly fine. We're not here on behalf of the President, Callum. We're an Independent Body. We're not here to force you to secure the President's re-election. Is that what you thought? I hope not. You couldn't have been further from the truth. Guy - do you mind if I tell him, Guy?

GUY: I've got nothing against transparency.

ROSIE: Guy here already told me that he voted for the Leader of the Opposition. He's a big supporter of his reforms.

GUY: I'm very liberal on social issues.

ROSIE: So, you see? We're only here to ensure the continuation of the Electoral Process. If you don't like the President, then it is your right as a citizen to vote him out. This is a democracy, after all. So, why don't you just vote for the Opposition?

CALLUM: The enemy of my enemy can still be my enemy.

Pause. GEORGIA enters, carrying a cup of tea. She puts down a coaster and gives CALLUM his cup.

GEORGIA: Here you are, darling.

CALLUM takes a sip.

CALLUM: Thank you.

GUY stands up and gestures to his chair. GEORGIA hesitates before sitting down. GUY stands behind her. CALLUM stares at him.

GUY: 'The enemy of my enemy can still be my enemy.' Goodness gracious.

ROSIE: That's quite an antagonistic way to view things, Callum. That's a very childish thing for you to say. I'm surprised at you. Why don't you just vote for the Leader of the Opposition? I just can't wrap my head around it. Just get rid of the President, if you have a problem with him

CALLUM: I'm not going to vote for the Leader of the Opposition.

ROSIE: Why not?

CALLUM: Because I don't *like* the leader of the Opposition! I don't *trust* him. I don't *agree* with him.

ROSIE: Do you think he's worse than the President?

Pause.

CALLUM: No.

ROSIE: Well, there you are! So, why not vote him in?

Pause.

CALLUM: Is that all democracy is to the pair of you? A squabble between the lesser of two evils? A battle to find the most polished tu-

GEORGIA: Callum!

ROSIE: This is the real world, Callum. We're not children, are we? I mean, do you expect politicians to be perfect?

CALLUM: No.

ROSIE: Well then.

GUY: There you go.

CALLUM: But I expect them to meet a bare minimum level of competence. Neither of these candidates demonstrate that, so I'm not going to vote for either of them.

GEORGIA: (*Quietly*) My husband is an idealistic man.

Pause. CALLUM and GEORGIA look at each other.

ROSIE: So, to you, your idealism is more important than democracy?

Pause.

ROSIE: Callum? I'd like you to answer my question, please.

CALLUM: What?

ROSIE: Is your idealism more important to you than our democracy?

CALLUM: My *idealism*, if that's what you want to call it, is more important than the election.

Pause.

GUY: Do you want to know what I think, Callum?

Pause.

GUY: I think you're just resentful.

CALLUM: Is that right?

GUY puts his hand on GEORGIA's shoulder. CALLUM stiffens. GEORGIA looks over her shoulder, then quickly looks away.

GUY: It's a sad state of affairs when a man such as yourself, a man of obvious intellect, a man who has dedicated himself to the service of his country, is reduced to such a resentful, embittered and nihilistic mess of a human being. Would you like to hear my diagnosis? I think I've managed to diagnose what's wrong with you. Would you like to know?

CALLUM: Not particularly. I'd like you to take your hand off my wife's shoulder.

Pause. GUY smiles. GUY removes his hand.

GUY: I think you're Disillusioned. Psychologically Disillusioned. It's a real shame. You're Disillusioned with your own country. It's hard to imagine a greater tragedy.

CALLUM: That's not true.

GUY: I think it is.

CALLUM: I have my problems with the Government but I'm not Disillusioned with my country.

GUY: Do you love your country?

Pause. GUY shakes his head.

GUY: Yes. A very severe case of Psychological Disillusionment.

GEORGIA: Hold on-

CALLUM: I don't *hate* my country, if that's what your trying to imply-

ROSIE: No, you just hate our democracy. You know, Callum. A veteran such as yourself really should know better. Our forefathers and foremothers fought and died - in battle - for our right to participate in the Electoral Process. Our democracy only thrives because of *their* devotion and *their* sacrifice. By sitting out of the election the way that you are, you're spitting on their sacrifice. You understand that, right? You understand how disrespectful that is?

CALLUM: Have you ever been in a war, Rosie?

Pause.

CALLUM: I didn't think so-

ROSIE: (*Annoyed*) What's that got to do with anything-?

CALLUM: I have. I'm the only one at this table...Forgive me, I'll assume I'm the only one at this table who's ever been in a war. Am I wrong, Guy?

Pause. GUY frowns. He goes to say something, then stops himself. He puts a hand on GEORGIA'S shoulder.

CALLUM: I'm the only one at this table who has actually spilled blood for our democracy - for the Electoral Process. So, I don't really think you have a leg to stand on, telling me I'm the one being disrespectful-

GEORGIA: (*Suddenly, sharply*) Get off!

GEORGIA pulls away from GUY, rubbing her shoulder in pain. CALLUM stands up. GUY smiles.

GUY: Perpetual hostility. Repressed anger. Sudden movements. Disrespect for government officials. The case for Psychological Disillusionment just keeps on growing.

ROSIE: Are you alright, Mrs Bowler?

GEORGIA: What?

ROSIE: Did something startle you?

GUY: Did your husband frighten you, Mrs Bowler?

GEORGIA: I think...I think I might have made a mistake.

ROSIE: A mistake?

About The Play

Democracy is a dystopian political satire, set in an alternative version of Britain suffering under the iron grip of a totalitarian regime that masquerades as a two-party system. In this authoritarian state, voting is mandatory for all citizens. They are given two candidates from two rival political parties to choose from. They must choose one or the other. That is the only choice permitted in this so-called 'democracy.' Anyone who refuses to participate in the electoral process, or who refuses to vote is branded as mentally ill and faces interrogation imprisonment and torture by representatives of the state. This state appears to be a republic of some kind that has undergone a violent revolution and had only recently ended a violent war, which resulted in widespread suffering for the inhabitants of this nightmarish landscape. The play opens with two organs of the regime, a bureaucrat called Rosie and a 'doctor' calling himself Guy. They are polite, affable, informal...and utterly determined to have their way. They have been called by Georgia, who has grown very concerned about her husband's decision not to vote in the upcoming election. Her

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husband, Callum, is a war veteran who has grown increasingly disillusioned by the absurd democratic farce and has no desire to involve himself in the charade. Callum's rebellion proves to have drastic consequences, not just for himself, but his whole family...

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