The Bunker

Walt Gallati

wggallati@wpi.edu

207-671-9459
The Bunker

Couple Alan and Judith Mihalyi, hungry and tired, discover a fully stocked bunker underneath Albany, New York. Can they return to normal life?

Setting

A bunker underneath Albany, New York. The year is 1964, two years after the Cuban missile crisis resulted in a nuclear exchange between America and the Soviet Union.

Characters

Alan Mihalyi: A 32-year-old automotive engineer from Albany, Alan and his wife Judith have been scraping by a living in Albany ever since the war ended.

Judith Mihalyi: A 30-year-old housewife from Albany. Has been married to Alan since before the bombs fell. Still pines for the time before the war.

Tape: A prerecorded narration intended for Governor Nelson Rockefeller in the event of nuclear war.
SCENE 1

[Scene is an unlit bunker. There is a military-style cot, freshly made and never used, in the far right corner of the room. Next to it, on the far wall, is a shelf containing canned goods and metal gasoline tanks full of water. A computer monitor and keyboard, large and blocky, sits on a table in the other corner next to a red telephone. In the center of the room, a large table sits with one chair. Despite never being used, the items in the room all look worn with age.]

[A man enters. He holds a flashlight with one hand and a large revolver with the other. He is dressed in a tattered sweater and button-up shirt, his once well-pressed khaki pants ragged and torn. A leather belt with a large knife, unbecoming of his more civilized attire, hangs on his hip. Upon the man’s back is a ragged pack, half-empty and worn. His face is obscured with a gas mask. He fumbles around near the wall, and finds a light switch, looking up as the lights slowly flicker on. The man sets down his flashlight and revolver on the table, then takes off his pack and rests it by the foot of the bed. He removes his gas mask to reveal that he is Alan]

Alan [through the door]: Judith! Come on in here!

[Judith enters through the door. Once a model 1950s housewife, the past few years have not been kind. Her dress is tattered, and is supplemented with a load-bearing vest. Her hair, once a well-kempt bouffant, has begun to fall apart, and it is evident that she had tried many times to return it to its former glory with minimal success. She stands in the doorway, taking everything in]

Judith: Oh my goodness. It looks untouched!

Alan: We must be the first people in Albany to have found this place.

Judith: Well that’s a relief. I was getting tired of hunting all the time.

Alan: We don’t have to worry about that anymore. Look at all this food! [He gestures to the shelf]

Judith: Would you look at that.

[Judith walks up to the shelf and looks it over]

Judith: I could make a casserole!

Alan [inspecting the other corner of the room]: You could make plenty of casseroles

Judith: And to believe that nobody has found this place yet.

Alan: Maybe they all know something that we don’t

[Judith turns her head to face Alan]

Judith: Well why do you have to be such a debbie downer? It’s not every day an opportunity like this falls into our lap.

Alan: Yeah, but it’s not like appendicitis happens every day either.
Judith: Alan Mihalyi, you are such a pessimist. The first canned food we find in a year and you have to think it’s… poisoned or something!

Alan: I’m just being realistic.

Judith: It’s not like we’ve seen anybody else for a few months now. For all we know we’re the last people in the city. And it’s not like I see the Robinsons dead on the doorstep over here.

Alan: You’re right, they’ve probably been eaten by crows by now or something.

Judith: Don’t you say that! The Robinsons were good people.

[There is a pause in the conversation as Judith returns to inspecting the shelf as Alan examines the room]

Judith: Oh my god, they have cigarettes in here.

[Judith pulls out a cigarette]

Judith: I haven’t had one of these in ages.

[She beckons to Alan]

Judith: Give me a light, will you darling?

Alan [producing a zippo]: We need to save fuel, we don’t have a lot left.

Judith: Oh come on, we have plenty here. It’s not every day you stumble upon a pack of Lucky Strikes.

Alan: Oh, fine.

[He lights Judith’s cigarette. She takes an exaggerated drag from it, then puts an arm over Alan’s shoulder]

Judith: Alan James Mihalyi, you are such a gentleman.

Alan [smiling]: If you say so.

[The two kiss]

Alan: You know what I bet these cigarettes would go well after?

[Judith pushes Alan onto the bed]

Judith: Oh you scamp!

[Judith joins Alan on the bed. Alan removes his belt, and begins to take off Judith’s vest. They are giggling, enjoying the act they have been deprived of for so long]

Judith: Wait.

Alan: What?
Judith: We should close the door.
Alan: What, are you afraid the Robinsons might find us?
Judith: Maybe! Somebody else might come in
Alan: Honey, we haven’t seen anybody else for three months. Do you honestly expect some schmuck is going to come wandering in now?
Judith: I’d feel a lot better if you closed the door.

[There is a long pause]

Alan: Fine.

[Alan walks to the door as Judith clasps the vest back on. There is a slight, barely audible click as the door shuts. The faint whirring noise of a tape begins, rising in volume as the characters speak]

Alan: You happy now?
Judith: Much better.

[The whirring is noticeable now]

Judith: What is that?

[The noise stops. There is a click and the tape begins]

Tape: Greetings Governor Rockefeller!

[Alan and Judith emit a shout of surprise. Alan reflexively reaches for his knife, but grasps empty air]

Tape: If you are hearing this, there has likely been a nuclear exchange with the Soviet Union. But fear not; this bunker has all you need to stay alive while the situation resolves itself above.

Judith: Oh my god, we’re in Nelson Rockefeller’s house
Alan: If this is his house he must have really downsized
Judith: You know what I mean

Tape: As the commander in chief of the New York National Guard, there is a phone and computational device in this room. From here, you can coordinate efforts to rebuild New York. You are our last line of defense keeping the red menace off of our shores. Good luck Governor, and may God be with you.

[The tape clicks again as it ends. The two sit in silence]

Alan: Well, that ruined the mood.
Judith: I almost slept with you in Nelson Rockefeller’s bed.
Alan: I would have imagined this place would have been a little nicer.
Judith: I almost slept with you in Nelson Rockefeller's bed.
Alan: I don’t see a single bit of gold leaf anywhere.
Judith: Alan!
Alan: What?
Judith: This really is our lucky break!
Alan: What, because we stole the Governor’s house?
Judith: Because he has a line to the National Guard. They’re bound to still be around, they have to be. They probably have food and water and shelter somewhere for people like us.
Alan: Look, we have plenty of food and water here. I’m not living in a camp.
Judith: But we could be outside! We could have a house again, and a job, and start a family…
Alan: I said no.
[There is a pause]
Judith: Fine.
[Alan sits down at the table. He leans backwards and sighs. As he does this, the lights begin to flicker before turning back on. A red light begins blinking on the computer]
Judith: What in God’s good name did you do this time Alan?
Alan: What, you think leaning back in my chair causes the power to go out?
Judith: Well it has to, you just did it!
[Alan leans back in chair. Nothing happens]
Alan: Look at me!
[Alan leans back again]
Alan: Electricity is mine to command!
Judith [upset]: Well you don’t have to be an ass about it.
[She turns away from Alan in a huff, and begins to look through the cans on the shelf again. As she is comparing canned goods, she notices the flashing light]
Judith: Alan?
Alan [turning to face her]: What is it now?
Judith: Has that red light always been there?
[The two look over at the blinking light in silence. Alan approaches it slowly and cautiously, while Judith remains frozen looking at it. They act almost as though any sudden movement will set something off. Alan looks at the computer, then presses a key. The monitor snaps to life, causing Judith to jump]

Alan: “Error: Dynamo experiencing problems”

Judith: What does that mean?

Alan: Well, if it’s anything like an alternator, we might not have much power left.

Judith: We might? Are you sure?

Alan: Look, it just says that the dynamo is experiencing problems. It doesn’t say it failed, it doesn’t say it works, it just says problems.

Judith: Well, can you figure it out?

Alan: I don’t know, I’ve never used one of these things

Judith: Let me try, I did take a typewriting class once

Alan: I’ve got it. How about you… make a casserole or something.

Judith: Fine, well – don’t come crying to me when you can’t figure out how a keyboard works

Alan: I took typewriting classes too, okay?

[Judith ignores him as she rummages through cans]

Alan: It’s a required class in elementary school!

[Judith continues to ignore him]

Alan: Fine.

[He resumes typing, slowly, on the computer]

Judith: I think we should call the Guard

Alan: And why is that?

Judith: We don’t know how long the battery here is going to last. If there’s a battery, of course. This dynamo thing could already be dead for all we know.

Alan: We’ve been without power before.

Judith: We might never get this opportunity again.

Alan: What, to get shot?

Judith: Alan!

[Alan shrugs]
Alan: I’m just saying.
Judith: They would never do that.
Alan: And I thought I’d never be in Nelson Rockefeller’s house, but here we are.
Judith: You are so obstinate
[Judith finishes organizing the shelf]
Judith: Six months
Alan: What?
Judith: We have enough food here for six months
Alan: This isn’t about the National Guard, is it?
Judith: I’m just saying, they might have a supply…
Alan: We’re not going to the Guard, okay? We can keep hunting, last us a little longer.
Judith: And then what Alan? What happens when the food runs out?
Alan: We find somewhere else!
[There is a pause]
Judith: I’m going to bed.
Alan: That’s not a bad idea.
[The two start heading for the bed]
Judith: Kinda a small bed for two people, don’t you think?
Alan: A bed’s a bed.
[Alan starts for the light]
Alan: I’ll get the lights
Judith: No, leave them on
Alan: Why?
Judith: If they go out, I don’t know if we can bring them back on.
[The two lie down together as the scene goes black]
SCENE 2

[Judith wakes up in the bed wearing the same clothes as yesterday. Alan is sitting at the table, looking concerned. The backpack is by the door, with the flashlight in it.]

Judith [yawning]: I haven’t slept like that in ages. Good morning!

Alan [upset]: Morning.

Judith: Oh, here we are again. Who pissed in your oatmeal?

[Alan gets up off of his chair]

Alan: Well, you kicked me out of bed last night

Judith: Sor-

Alan: Wait. I decided to get some fresh air, and found this.

[Alan tries to open the door. It does not budge]

Alan: We’re stuck in here.

Judith: What?

Alan: We’re stuck in here, dammit!

[He kicks the door]

Alan: It’s not moving.

[Judith gets out of bed]

Judith: Well, let me try

[She tries to open the door, to no avail]

Alan: Trust me, I tried it all morning

Judith: It must be that dynamo thing.

Alan: I don’t think it controls the doors.

Judith: Well, it has to.

[Judith walks over to the computer]

Alan: Where are you going?

Judith: To check the computer

[Silence as Judith recognizes why he was asking]

Judith: You thought I was going to call the National Guard, weren’t you?

Alan: No…
Judith: Alan Mihalyi, you answer me right now. Did you think I was going to call the National Guard?

Alan: Well, you did have the hots for them yesterday.

Judith: I can’t believe you! We’re stuck in a bunker and you don’t want to call the only people who can help us.

Alan: I don’t trust them, is all

Judith: Don’t trust them? Stuck in a bunker in the middle of Albany and you think you can afford to not trust them?

Alan: It’s been two years, Judith. If they wanted to save us they would have by now.

Judith: You never know.

[She picks up the phone and puts it to her ear]

Judith: Hello?

Alan: Judith!

Judith: Hello? Is anybody there?

[Alan rushes up and tries to grab the phone. They struggle briefly before Judith wrestles it away from him]

Judith: Alan! What in hell has gotten into you?

[The lights in the bunker begin to flicker. The red light reappears]

Alan: Christ.

[Judith puts down the phone and sits in the computer chair]

Judith: “Error: Dynamo experiencing problems”

Alan: Nothing’s going to have changed, Judith.

[Judith keeps typing]

Judith: There’s an information packet in here. Hold on…

[Judith types again]

Judith: Welcome, Governor Rockefeller, to the operations bunker. From here, you will have full control over the forces of the New York National Guard. This bunker will have all you need while we regain control of the situation aboveground. For your safety, the bunker will remain locked for one year while rescue and cleanup operations complete.

Alan: One year?
Judith: We understand that security is significant, but we cannot have a figurehead such as you fall into the hands of the communists. If there is an emergency in the bunker, General O’Hara possesses the access codes to open the bunker early. Contact him and he will dispatch a unit to rejoin you with the main force. Good luck, and may God be with you.

[They sit and dwell on this]

Alan: Jesus

Judith: We can call them! They can get us out!

Alan: Yeah, but are they still alive?

Judith: I’m sure of it!

[She reaches for the phone. Alan blocks her hand]

Alan: Judith, did you hear anything on the other end of that phone?

Judith: No, but…

Alan: They’re not coming Judith.

[Judith has run out of tears. She sits, empty, with a thousand yard stare. Alan is stone-faced]

Alan: We need to find out how to open that door.

[He walks over as Judith sobers up]

Alan: I wonder if we can get through when the power goes out

Judith: I hope so

[The two stand there for a second. The lights begin to flicker again. Alan wrenches at the door]

Alan: Nothing.

Judith: We’re going to die in here.

Alan: No we aren’t

Judith: Yes we are.

Alan: And what makes you think that?

Judith: I counted the cans last night. There’s only enough food for six months.

Alan: That’s insane, Rockefeller couldn’t have stayed here alone.

Judith: Think about it. What in this room implies it would have been made for two people?

[Alan looks around. The table, the bed, the chairs – there’s only enough for one]

Judith: Rockefeller didn’t expect to have any family here. He was supposed to be here by himself. And now we’re trapped in here together.
[Alan paces nervously]
Alan: FUCK!
Judith: There’s nobody coming, Alan.
Alan: We can make it. We can stretch the rations, we can last the year…
Judith: Alan
Alan: What?
Judith: It’s over. You were right.
Alan: About what?
Judith: About this being a trap. About there being a reason nobody came here.
Alan: Nobody could have known.
Judith: But they might have. They might have steered clear. They sure as hell didn’t get stuck in here like this.

[There is a pause. Judith notices the backpack by the door]
Judith: Alan?
Alan: Yeah?
Judith: How did you know the door was locked?
Alan: You said it, locked for a year
Judith: No, you found that out before I woke up. How did you find it out?
Alan: I wanted some fresh air.
Judith: With the backpack?
Alan: What about the backpack?
Judith: It’s not where it was yesterday. And neither is the flashlight.

[They look into each others’ eyes]
Judith: If I were to look in the backpack, would there be food in there?

[They continue glaring at each other across the table as the lights flicker]
Alan: I love you, Judith.
Judith: I love you too, Alan.
The two dive for the revolver on the table. They wrestle, then roll onto the floor. The lights flicker again as the two struggle for dominance. As the dynamo finally fails, a gunshot is heard, and the room is plunged into darkness.

END