

This Time It's For Real

John Bandler

A young man threatens his girlfriend with suicide.



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This Time It's For Real

A one-act play

By John Bandler

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THIS TIME IT'S FOR REAL - A Stage Play

By John Bandler

PLOT SUMMARY

A young man threatens his girlfriend with suicide

CHARACTERS

CHARLES, a young man

MONICA, a young woman

SETTING

A coffee shop

SCENE: A COFFEE SHOP

Sitting at a table in a coffee shop, CUPS and PHONES at hand, CHARLES and MONICA.

MONICA
(in a loud whisper)

Keep your voice down, Charlie!

CHARLES

This time it's for real.

MONICA

Right. Like the last time.

CHARLES

Listen. Just listen!

MONICA
(lifts CUP, takes a slug of coffee)

Like you're gonna do yourself in right here and now in front of this crowd of fans that's been getting an earful of your ranting and raving for the past hour.

CHARLES makes a fist and glares at her.

CHARLES

This time it is for real, Monica.

MONICA

It always is. Look, I've just about exhausted everything I know what to say. And I'm exhausted. You need a shrink.

CHARLES
(now calmer, head down)

I want to die.

MONICA

You need help like crazy, to see you through this. I need help too. I'm not your shrink. You know, I've no idea what shrinks really do except, maybe, listen, and when you say stupid stuff like "I wanna die" they say things like "and what does that make you feel?"

CHARLES

I'll tell you what it makes me feel --

MONICA

Can we get out of here?

CHARLES

I'm so sorry.

MONICA

Enough.

CHARLES

I'm not like this. This isn't me!

MONICA

It's not you. It's not like you that's carrying on like this. Right? It's your coffee. You know, you know what? I'm out of here.

She half stands, looks at him, slumps back down.

MONICA

You've everything to live for.

CHARLES

I've nothing to live for.

MONICA

You're the most privileged --

CHARLES

Nothing!

MONICA

Calm down, Charles. They say that time is the great healer.

(tries her hand at humor)

But they could be wrong. Right? Like, whoever "they" are.

CHARLES

Time makes things worse. It's not the great healer they say it is. And the longer the time the worse it gets.

MONICA

You want me to take notes? For the shrink?

CHARLES

Don't laugh at me.

MONICA

(serious)

OK. What's happened, has happened, Charlie. You're a crazy perfectionist. Over-the-top. OK. You've had this huge, great big shock. And you're reeling from it. OK? That, I can understand. It's not your fault.

(suddenly philosophic)

I have an idea. Nature. It's nature. It's like this transient effect, see. Like with butterflies, the butterfly effect, that's what they call it. It's something that starts off with a big bang and makes you cycle through all these high highs and low lows. I think if you just force yourself to keep those highs low and those lows high, otherwise --

CHARLES

(puzzled, inquisitive)

Are you making this up?

MONICA

You can't make this crazy stuff up.

CHARLES

Stop it.

MONICA

The big bang.

CHARLES

Where are you going with this?

MONICA

Just trying to be helpful.

CHARLES

You're not trying hard enough.

MONICA

You have to do it in public, right? Like everything else with you, it has to be done in public. Right? This is so B movie.

CHARLES

I need to think.

MONICA

Make that a B minus.

CHARLES

Shut up, shut up, shut, up! I need you to be quiet for once!

A long SILENCE.

CHARLES

I need to get a grip on things.

MONICA

Perfectionist.

CHARLES

(bashes the table quietly with his fists)

Loser, loser, loser!

MONICA

This is so like you, you know.

CHARLES

This is not helping --

MONICA

Accept it. I give up. You're beyond help.

(pause, change of tone)

Look, I'm just trying to calm you down.

CHARLES

(loud)

I don't want to calm down!

MONICA

(makes as if to rise)

You want to die. I get that. So why don't you just do it. Die!

CHARLES

Yeah. That might work.

MONICA

Let's get this over with.

CHARLES

There's that text you sent me. Remember?

MONICA

What text?

CHARLES

The one that starts off with, "Dying...?"

MONICA

I don't remember any such text.

CHARLES

(imitates MONICA)

"Dying clean might be the one noble thing you'll ever accomplish, all by your very self."

A SILENCE.

MONICA

I'd never say, "dying clean."

CHARLES

Well, when they do the autopsy and find that text on my phone --

MONICA

-- don't do this --

CHARLES

-- they'll know who pushed me to do it.

MONICA

(slumps back into her chair)

You're making all this up.

CHARLES

My family will blame you. Your family will blame you.

MONICA

Why are you so set on making me wish I'd never met you.

CHARLES

You hate me.

MONICA

Charlie!

CHARLES

You always hated me.

MONICA

This is getting too serious.

CHARLES

That's the best thing I've heard from you all day.

MONICA

(looks around)

Stop. People really look alarmed.

CHARLES

Good.

MONICA

(still looking around)

We're gonna get thrown out.

CHARLES

I want to get thrown out!

MONICA

Give this up, Charlie. OK?

(brings out her PHONE)

You know what? I give up. I'm calling 9-1-1.

CHARLES

They'll arrest you.

MONICA

Nonsense.

CHARLES

I'll tell them you set me up for this.

MONICA

You won't.

CHARLES

I have, like, no idea right now what I'm doing.

MONICA

Or saying.

CHARLES

Yeah.

MONICA

You never do, until you do it. You even have to find this totally elegant way to die, so people will say, "Charles found this totally awesome way of putting an end to his precious life and stick it to his enemies. What a terrible loss to humanity. And he was so young!" Is that what you want people to say?

(pause)

And your friends and family? Let's call it a day, Charlie. See a shrink.

CHARLES

Never.

MONICA

I'll come with you.

(looks around)

We better go, Charlie. Looks like the manager is heading our way. This time it's for real.

END

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