

Until The Last Drop

John Bandler

Two young women find themselves trapped by the paradox of time.



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Until The Last Drop

A one-act play

By John Bandler

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UNTIL THE LAST DROP

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PLOT SUMMARY

Two young women find themselves trapped by the paradox of time.

CHARACTERS

LORENZIA, a young woman

ASHLEY, a young woman

SETTING

A coffee shop

SCENE: A COFFEE SHOP

Alone at a table, CUP in hand, ASHLEY quietly enjoys her coffee when LORENZIA abruptly appears seated in the opposite chair.

ASHLEY

(startled)

Oh! Oh god. Sorry. I didn't see you sit down.

LORENZIA

Sorry to startle you.

ASHLEY

(wipes her eyes)

God. I must have blanked right out.

LORENZIA

Crazy times?

ASHLEY

You can say that again! Scientists admitting that global warming is a hoax, and always was? And warming deniers screaming "global warming" from the rooftops?

LORENZIA

Is that strange?

ASHLEY

Where have you been living?

LORENZIA

You tell me.

ASHLEY

Aren't you getting yourself a coffee? Their coffees are really awesome. You can't rely on those politicians. But you can rely on this coffee. Right down to the last drop.

ASHLEY takes a sip from her CUP.

LORENZIA

(looks around)

Why do you come here?

ASHLEY

Here? For the coffee, of course! I just told you why!

LORENZIA

But you can brew the same quality at home, can you not? You do have a home, do you not?

ASHLEY

Can you not? Do you not? I like that. That's so different! Right out of Shakespeare, or wherever. Where do you come from?

LORENZIA

It's a long story.

ASHLEY

Listen. I'm wide awake now. Tell me your story. I love stories. Hit me.

LORENZIA

My hands are tied.

ASHLEY

Wow! You mean, you're sworn to secrecy? That's even better. Now I really must know.

LORENZIA

Our word is our bond. Sealed are my lips.

ASHLEY

That's not fair.

LORENZIA

The danger in my words is unpredictable.

ASHLEY

God. What planet do you come from?

LORENZIA

I am unable to say. But what I came for is your story.

ASHLEY

Are you, like, kidding me? You want my story? There's nothing unpredictable or dangerous about my story, I assure you. I dropped out of psychology five years ago, I hold down two jobs to make ends meet, and I kicked my beer-guzzler boyfriend into the street last week. There's nothing else really worth knowing.

LORENZIA

You do yourself and mankind a disservice.

SILENCE.

ASHLEY

Wait. You came here for my story? Do you know me? Are you from the police or CIA or something?

LORENZIA

Not quite.

ASHLEY

Oh wow. What have I done? Last time I got a speeding ticket was --

LORENZIA

You have done nothing wrong.

ASHLEY

Then I'm a witness? What happened? Oh my god. That's it! I knew he would come to no good.

LORENZIA

It's not what you think.

ASHLEY

It never is, right? Worse? Is that what you meant by dangerous and unpredictable? Has he gone off his meds again?

LORENZIA

It is so instructive to watch you attempting all these little guesses.

ASHLEY takes a sip from her CUP.

ASHLEY

(with relief)

By your tone, my worst fears are unfounded, right?

LORENZIA

What commitments do you have at this time?

ASHLEY

Commitments? Right now? Free as a bird, if you don't count being up to my eyeballs in debt.

LORENZIA

Good.

ASHLEY

No children, no animals, no nothing.

LORENZIA

Excellent. Then we can continue.

ASHLEY

Great. You'll tell me your story then. I'm all into danger if I can watch it or hear it, like, from my couch.

LORENZIA

You have such an interesting way of articulating feelings of danger. You will be appreciated. As I said, conveying my story to your ears is fraught with global consequences --

ASHLEY

Global consequences. This is deep shit! You know, when you open a story that way, you do realize you'd better deliver? You're keeping me on tender-hooks!

LORENZIA

You will disappear shortly.

ASHLEY

Are you, like, going to kidnap me? Right here in broad daylight? I'm worth nothing. Absolutely nothing. You've got the wrong person. No one will give you a penny for me. You can torture me all you like...

LORENZIA

It is good that you have no idea what is to come. This way we can both ensure that the laws of physics are obeyed without us spiraling into the abyss.

ASHLEY

What laws of physics? What abyss? What the hell are you talking about? You're mad. Oh my god. You've escaped from somewhere. Oops. I'm sorry I said that. Are you OK? Do you need help? I can make a call for you.

LORENZIA

I am in perfect control.

ASHLEY

We all think that. And, of course, we're all wrong.

LORENZIA

You have been chosen.

ASHLEY

Are you on that line again?

LORENZIA

You are currently our only hope.

ASHLEY

I think we'd better stop this. I have to go. Are you sure I can't help you?

LORENZIA

You see, it's all a question of the paradox.

ASHLEY

The paradox.

As ASHLEY listens in utter disbelief...

LORENZIA

Yes. Time travel to the future is accommodated by physics as we know it, but time travel to the past involves a paradox: history must remain intact. But we have discovered a mathematical crack, a sliver of probabilistic opportunity in the paradox. You have been chosen because of this rare probabilistic opportunity. The ripple effect, the disturbance, of plucking you out of your instant of time is sufficiently fast decaying, sufficiently unobtrusive, you will not be missed... Having established our relationship --

ASHLEY

-- What relationship? --

LORENZIA

-- it is imperative that you not disclose any aspect of our meeting, our discourse. Thus, we will proceed forthwith with total understanding, full compliance and discretion. Nothing we say here will leak out.

ASHLEY

(pinching herself)

I must be dreaming. You've got me totally confused. What is so hush-hush?

As ASHLEY listens in horror...

LORENZIA

If it leaked out that I am from the future, the ripple effect can be catastrophic. Fortunately, our mathematics and historical analysis have assured us that this will not happen. The ripple will die superfast. My presence here is protected in that I am physically prevented from any act or acts that violate physics. Your movements and actions going forward are suitably constrained too. You will find certain normal interactions, indeed almost all interactions, in the next few minutes only, to be absolutely constrained. Futile.

ASHLEY

What about all those questions you fired at me? About commitments? Is it money you want?

LORENZIA

You will finish your coffee and rise briefly. Then you will disappear from this point in time.

ASHLEY

I really have to go. Nice meeting you.

ASHLEY struggles to get up, but is unable to.

LORENZIA

It is useless, Ashley.

ASHLEY

You know my name!

LORENZIA

Of course. We routinely travel back in time to watch, listen and compile and remove inaccuracies from human history. But disturbing the past and bringing a specimen forward

--

ASHLEY

-- Specimen? Why all those questions if you already know everything?

LORENZIA

A routine check. Bringing a specimen intact to our point in time has proved elusive until now, and we need extra care. You will simply disappear and never be heard from again. You will have no effect on the immediate future.

ASHLEY

What?

LORENZIA

It is painless.

ASHLEY

What if I resist?

LORENZIA

Time and history prove relentless, Ashley. You are chosen. You will be placed at a point in time slightly ahead of my time point. Have heart! We have determined to 15 significant digits that your arrival point in time is safe and that you are unlikely to die in the transfer. You will be debt free and live a productive life. Now drink up, Ashley. It is time to drink your “awesome” coffee to the last drop.

ASHLEY

Oh my God!

Shivering, ASHLEY picks up her CUP and drinks the last drop.

END

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