

Paradox

PROPS: One bar with a couple of fake pumps, or similar, A few beers, Two chairs at the bar. One pen, a table and two chairs Some sugar or similar in a plastic bag, something that will dissolve in a beer

Cast:

PERSON1: 40's / 50's (Middle)

PERSON2: 20's / 30's (Young)

PERSON3: 60's / 70's (Old)

They must be the same gender and roughly the same height and build. Its not really important if its male or female however because people make subconscious presumptions I actually feel it works better with three females.

BARSTAFF: Running the bar, so it does not matter, they can be anyone.

THE BAR

PERSON 3 and Person 2 sit at the bar.

PERSON3 (OLD)
So you know what to do?

PERSON2 (YOUNG)
Sure, don't worry about it.

PERSON3 (OLD)
Just don't mess it up.

Person 3 hands person 2 the bag with white powder in it, Person 2 pockets it.

Person 3 exits

Person 2 is sat at the bar drinking a pint. Person 1 walks in from the side and takes the seat next to them.

Person 1 looks over the beers, reading the pump clips

PERSON2 (YOUNG)
I'd steer clear of the spitting
pope

Person 1 looks at person 2

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

Huh, oh. How did you know I was going to pick that?

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

Lucky guess, its the one I would have picked

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

Are you sure its going off? They usually keep the beer well here

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

Tell you what, how about a friendly wager. You buy a spitting pope, if its off or going off then you buy the next round. If its fine, I'll buy the next one

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

Ah I'm not much of a gambler. I used to have a problem with it.

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

Its not really gambling, but trust me I get it. Okay, if its off then you listen to my story

Barman/Woman comes along

BARSTAFF

Evening, what can I get you

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

Hi, yeah I'll have a spitting pope please

BARSTAFF

Anything else?

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

Nope that's it thank you.

The bar staff pulls a pint and places it on the bar, Person 1 pays for it

PERSON1 (MIDDLE) (CONT'D)

Cheers

BARSTAFF

Enjoy

Bar staff exit

Person 1 takes a sniff of the beer, looks at it then takes a large gulp. They put the beer back down on the bar and turn to Person 2

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

This had better be a good story

Person 1 looks for the bar staff they are nowhere to be seen

PERSON1 (MIDDLE) (CONT'D)

So what is it about?

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

The end of the world

Barstaff walks back in, person 1 sees them and turns to them.

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

Look, I don't want to be a pain.
I think that pints off

The barstaff look at the beer.

BARSTAFF

Looks okay to me, but you're the boss. Want me to swap it?

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

Sure, that'd be great

They look over the beers once again

PERSON1 (MIDDLE) (CONT'D)

Supernova please

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

Good choice

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

Is that what you're on?

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

Yeah, I like a good pint

Barstaff put the new pint on the bar

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

Thank you

BARSTAFF

No problem sir

Barstaff exits.

Person 1 takes a gulp and puts the glass down.

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

Better?

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

Much. So what's this story?

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

Okay, so two people sit in a bar

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

Really?

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

Nah, I'm just messing with you.
Okay lets see, what do you do for
a living?

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

I'm in IT

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

Cool, what websites and stuff?

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

No, I do programming

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

Awesome, I've always wanted to do
that. I'm currently in repairing
the bloody things

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

I did that years back. The money
got crap so I changed to this

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

Nice, was it worth it?

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

Yeah. Well it is now, I found I
had a real talent for it. It was
a risk at the time

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

To many people in the marketplace?

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

Pretty much, if you're good you can go far. If you're average or crap, and there are a lot, you tend to struggle

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

So that's your way of saying you're good?

Person 1 takes another sip

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

Me, I'm bloody excellent

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

Hah! I like your style. So do you know what a paradox is?

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

Sure, don't go back in time and screw your grandparent

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

Sure, there are loads of em, but yeah that is the basic drift. You know, you have a chance to kill Hitler but if you kill Hitler then things splinter and you end up with a different world

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

Sure

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

Okay, so do you kill Hitler?

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

I think so, yeah. I mean different may be bad, but can it be as bad?

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

Yeah, So we may still have had World War 2, but the holocaust may not have happened

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

Exactly. It can't be much worse

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

Agreed. So what if you're Hitler and you realise your mistake so you go back and kill yourself

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

You're in a paradox, If you kill yourself then you never exist to go back

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

Bingo, you see that is where I was stuck. It's all theoretical obviously so you can do that in fiction

(pause)

Heck who knows maybe you can do it and when we finish this we'll leave into a world where Hitler never existed

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

Doesn't work either, we wouldn't be talking about him if that happened because we wouldn't have any knowledge of it

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

Blimey, we really are on the same wavelength, again that is where I get stuck.

Person 2 takes a swig of the beer

PERSON2 (YOUNG) (CONT'D)

A story then. So we have a computer programmer, that's you

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

Nice, so I'm Hitler?

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

Well it could have been worse. Had you not come in I was going to have to start with "So we have someone who works behind a bar". But no, you're not Hitler.

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

Good, I was starting to like you

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

Right, so... maybe that doesn't work. So how about two guys. Ones a programmer and ones a tech guy. So you and me?

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

So two guys.

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

Make it one actually. Does both. So started in tech then moved on to programming

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

So what does this guy do?

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

End of the world, duh.

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

As you do. So he kills everyone?

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

It all seems a bit cliché doesn't it?

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

I've always said something is generally a cliché because its true

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

I'll have to remember that one for if I ever get published

Person 2 takes a pen from their pocket and starts twirling it in their fingers.

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

So what does he do?

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

I don't think it matters to much to be honest

Person 2 continues to whirl their pen in their hand

PERSON2 (YOUNG) (CONT'D)

Lets say they create a rouge AI,
No, not rouge. It a AI that
actually follows the rules. It
wipes out half of humanity to
save the other half

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

Sure I've heard that one too

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

Like I say it's not important

The pen slips from their arm and falls to the floor, on
person 1's side of the bar. Person 1 leans over to pick it
up, as they do so person 2 empties the contents of the bag
that Person 3 gave them into Person 1's beer. Person 1 sits
back up and hands the pen back to person 2

PERSON2 (YOUNG) (CONT'D)

Cheers, sorry about that. Butter
fingers

Person 2 puts the pen away

PERSON2 (YOUNG) (CONT'D)

So like I said its not important

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

So world ends, gets taken over by
robots whatever?

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

Pretty much. So they have done
this by mistake. They could not
have known what the AI would do,
how could they

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

So you use something like
Asimov's rules

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

That is where the scenario with
it trying to save humanity comes
in, but anyway, like I said, its
not important

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

So what happens?

Person 1 takes a large gulp, Person 2 watches

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

They have a deep regret at seeing what has happened, and as they are tech minded they team up with a bunch of survivors and create a time machine. They intend to go back and kill themselves

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

Hence the paradox

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

Right, like I said it could be anything. Hitler, a biochemist, heck a nuclear armed dictator. The point is they regret their actions. So through lots of work they figure out how to travel back in time

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

But if they kill themselves

Person 1 yawns

PERSON1 (MIDDLE) (CONT'D)

Sorry, that was rude. But if they kill themselves then they never existed so it doesn't work

Person 1 finishes their pint

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

Quite. Say are you feeling okay? You're looking a little pale

Person 1 wipes their brow

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)

Actually I am feeling really drunk

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

Come here, sit down over here

They move over to the table and chairs. Person 1 is wobbly, Person 2 helps them . They sit at the table. The bar staff come back in and look at Person 1 and 2

BARSTAFF

Is he/she okay?

PERSON2 (YOUNG)
 Actually no, I think they're a
 bit pissed

PERSON2 (YOUNG) (CONT'D)
 (To person 1)
 Do you want me to get you a cab?

PERSON1 (MIDDLE)
 I think, I think you'd better

PERSON2 (YOUNG)
 (to barstaff)
 Any chance you can call em a cab?

BARSTAFF
 Sure, do you know where they are
 going?

PERSON2 (YOUNG)
 Hughes Close

BARSTAFF
 Cheers

Barstaff leaves

Person 2 sits at the table. They finish their beer.

PERSON2
 So then I thought. What if you go
 back and collect your younger
 self at a point before they even
 started on the project. You
 collect them, take them

Person 1 collapse's on the table, as if they were asleep.

PERSON2 (CONT'D)
 Forward and show them what they
 did. You then go back to a point
 in the middle and your younger
 self kills the person. Paradox
 avoided

Person 2 gets up and stands between the bar and person 1.
 They lean over and check Person 1s pulse, that done they turn
 back to the bar and bar staff

BARSTAFF
 Taxi's coming

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

I think they're sleeping it off

BARSTAFF

Another?

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

Nah I've got to go, Cheers though

BARSTAFF

Hey, I couldn't help but overhear. You do know its still a paradox right? They just cant kill themselves without creating it, and what about the third version?

PERSON2 (YOUNG)

Yeah, that's true, its all theoretical anyway. Who knows maybe they walk out of the pub into a brave new world and live out the rest of their life, or maybe they walk out and vanish. I don't think it matters. The fate of the youngest and older ones are left hanging. They have saved the world. What does one life matter when it is weighed against billions?

BARSTAFF

Bit of a cliché though ain't it?

PERSON2

Ah, it's a cliché because it's true.

Person 2 leaves the set

END.