

Paradox

written by

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R 0.2

SET:

Ideally you have this set in a bar, so you need a bar and bar stools. You could change it slightly to set it in a cafe or similar so you could get away with chairs and a table. A few lines here and there would have to be tweaked but the overall story wouldn't be altered. It would lose some of the fun value in places though as I have called the beers same like "Endless loop"

So the perfect set would be a long bar with a few stools in front of it. A few beer pumps on tap and a couple of glasses of beer. In front of the bar would be a table with a couple of chairs around it. Somewhere that people would usually sit to eat.

Then you just need a pen and a plastic bag with a little sugar in it, or anything that will dissolve in the drink and be safe to consume.

CASTING.

The three leads need to be the same gender and of a similar height and build. They need to be around 20 years apart in age from each other. So if your person 1 is 40, then 2 is 20 and 3 is 60. Clothing is not really relevant but it would be nice to have a similar style going on between the three. The same style glasses would be a nice touch but with the generational differences between them as they have evolved in style over 40 odd years.

Person 1 - 40

Person 2 - 20

Person 3 - 60

The **Barstaff** are just there to bounce of at times and to wrap things up, they serve drinks and join in with a few lines so how they are cast really doesn't matter.

THE BAR.

Curtains open / Lights on and we see a bar with two people sat at it.

PERSON 3 (OLDEST)

So you know exactly what you have
to do?

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

Sure sure, look I told you I've got this

PERSON 3 (OLDEST)

Just don't mess it up, you know how important this is.

Person 3 hands a baggie with white powder to person 2. Person 2 looks at it and then pockets it.

Person 3 stands and leaves the set.

Person 2 sits for a moment alone, looking at their beer. They feel down in their pocket as if checking for the baggie.

Person 1 enters the set from the side and walks to the bar. They lean over checking the pumps. Reading the beer labels and alcohol content.

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

I'd steer clear of the endless loop, it's starting to go

Person 1 looks at person 2, gives them a quick once over

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

How'd you know that was going to be my choice?

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

Educated or a lucky guess I suppose, it was the one I picked at first.

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

You sure it is turning? They usually keep the beer pretty well.

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

Tell you what, you buy a loop and if it is not going off I'll buy your next one. If its going then if you want you can buy my next one.

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

Ah, I don't know, I am not much of a gambler

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

Well it is your call. Worse case you buy an extra pint, best you get a free one. But sure, okay how about this. If its off you sit here and listen to a story I have to tell.

Person 1 looks at their phone or watch, as if checking they have time

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

Sure, screw it. Why not.

Barstaff enter the set

BARSTAFF

Evening, what can I get you?

Person 1 points at the pump as they order

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

I'll have a pint of the loop please.

Barstaff grab a glass and start to pull a pint

BARSTAFF

Anything else?

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

Nope, that's it thank you

Person 1 pays for the drink

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE) (CONT'D)

Cheers

Barstaff exit the set, Person 1 takes a large gulp of the beer, swallows and then waits for a moment. They turn to person 2

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE) (CONT'D)

This had better be a damn good story.

Person 1 looks over the bar, trying to see if they can catch the barstaffs eye.

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE) (CONT'D)

So what's the story about?

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

Ah you know the usual. Boy meets girl, girl and boy fall in love. Boy and girl fall out of love, oh and the end of the world.

The barstaff return to the set, person 1 gets waves them over

BARSTAFF

Problem?

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

Yeah, look sorry to be a pain in the arse, but I think that's going off.

The barstaff looks at Person 2

BARSTAFF

You thought that too didn't you? Cant see anything wrong myself, but hey ho you're the boss. So I can do you a black hole, or a lager. Sorry I can't do anything about the loop there is still half a barrel left and its not my call to pull it.

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

No worries, I'll gave a black hole please

The barstaff pull a fresh pint, replace the old one and then leaves the set once more.

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE) (CONT'D)

This what you're on?

Person 1 takes another large gulp

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

Yeah, better?

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

Much, so end of the world huh? Hows it start?

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

Okay, so two people walk into a bar

Person 1 gives them a strange look, and sighs slightly

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

Really?

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

No of course not. Look how it starts is not important. I can go through lines and lines about people meeting, what they got up too. Falling in love, falling out of love but all that would be irrelevant to the overall story. So lets start with a job, for example what do you do?

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

I'm in IT

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

Really? Me too. Don't say you're in repairs as well?

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

Programming...

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

Damn that's something I always wanted to get into, it never seems to stick

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

Give it time, I used to be the same. Started in repairs but then I hit thirty and it just seemed to fall into place.

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

Maybe, maybe. You never know what the future holds. So are you any good at it?

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

I do alright, I don't want to brag but yeah I am doing alright

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

Awesome. So back to stories, do you know what a paradox is?

Person 1 takes a swig of beer

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

Sure, don't go back in time and screw your grandmother, or as Fry once put it "Do the nasty in the pasty"

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

Yeah, there are loads of them but that is the grandfather paradox. You get the idea, you can't change things without causing giant butterflies to exist and consume us all. So you go back, kill Hitler, then the world splinters and you have two worlds. Hiter lives in one and one without him

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

Who's to say the new world won't be better?

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

You can never know, it could be worse. Two world wars in twenty odd years. Take Hitler out and maybe they carried on going fighting decade after decade. You just can't ever know for sure... So if you never know do you still go back and kill Hitler?

Person 1 thinks it over

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

Me? Yeah I would. I mean things would be different, but could they really be worse than things like the holocaust?

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

Right... right.

Person 2 takes a drink

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST) (CONT'D)

We think along the same lines. World War 2 may have happened, heck number three and four may have happened but the horrors of events that we know, they can't be surpassed can they?

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

I suppose you have to look at it also being the start and the end of people using nuclear weapons. People saw the horror, true real horror, and thankfully it has not been done since.

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

You may never have even had them if Hitler didn't exist, that then leads to not having nuclear energy

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

Could be a better world though, new technology discovered to replace what we once knew

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

So what then if you're Hitler? Do you realise your mistake and go back and kill yourself? You're in those last moments in the bunker, you have a sudden moment of realisation and you have the chance to go back and stop yourself.

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

Then you're in paradox land, You go back kill yourself, then you never exist to go back and kill yourself.

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

Quite, this was where I got stuck. It is all hypothetical obviously

(pause)

Who's to say it won't happen and time just resets to that event then plays out again from that point. The world splits but one is stuck in the thirties and the other is running along from this point.

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

So you are saying time is... what's the word, flexible? Capable of being reset

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

Who knows, I am just throwing it out there. Musing the idea. Right so we have a computer programmer

Person 2 points at person 1

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

So we've gone from Hitler and paradoxes to me, hold on are you saying I'm

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

No, god no. I am just framing some ideas. Right okay then lets take two guys, ones a programmer and ones a tech guy. No that doesn't work. Okay, one guy. Started in tech, that's me. Ended up in programming, that's you.

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

Okay, so the guy starts a world war?

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

Nah, nothing so bland he ends the world.

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

As you do, so he wipes out everyone. Nobody left?

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

Pockets of people I suppose, but overall the world is dying and dying quickly. End of the world, everyone dying? All seems a bit cliché doesn't it?

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

I've often said things are a cliché because they are generally true.

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

I'll have to remember that one

The both chuckle a little

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

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

So how does he do it? How does he end the world?

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

I don't think it matters. Some stories are about the journey, some start at the end and work on from there. This one starts with the end of the world. Given our guy it's some IT genius lets say he creates an AI that decides to save humanity, to do so it has to wipe most of it out, overpopulation lets keep it topical. Then the people rebel against it and well, you've heard it all before.

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

So it could be a chemist with a virus, AI in our case, or just a deadly pandemic

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

Any of em, doesn't matter. Point is what he did leads to humanity holding on by a few threads and those threads are starting to snap, one by one.

The pen slips from person 2s fingers as they twirl it, it falls to the floor. Person 1 leans over to pick it up, getting of the stool as they do so. They turn their back to the bar. As they do this person 2 grabs the baggie from their pocket and empties the contents into person 1s pint.

Person 1 gets back up and hands the pen to person 2.

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST) (CONT'D)

Cheers, sorry about that. Butter fingers.

Person 2 puts the pen away.

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST) (CONT'D)

I'll put it away, I am awful for fidgeting

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

World ends, gets taken over by robots, butterflies.. Whatever. So what now?

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

Well it was a mistake, it is important to know that. They did not intend for it to happen. Like killing Hitler it was an unknown consequence of their actions. They thought everything was safe and they were doing the right thing.

Person 1 takes a large gulp of their beer

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST) (CONT'D)

So they have a deep regret and decide, you know, as you do, to build a time machine and he dedicates his life to it. It takes him nearly twenty years but in the end he gets there, he decides to go back and stop himself from ever doing it.

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

So there is a paradox

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

Right, like I say it could be any disaster but you still end up with the same issue.

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

So, if they go back and

Person 1 yawns

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE) (CONT'D)

Sorry, that was rude of me. If they kill themselves then they won't exist so it doesn't work.

Person 1 finishes the pint and puts the glass down on the bar.

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

Hey, are you okay?

Person 2 looks over person 1

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST) (CONT'D)

You've come across quite pale.

Person 1 wipes their brow

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

God, I actually feel like I've
had a skin full. I feel so drunk
all of a sudden

Person 2 gets up from their stool

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

Come here, sit down over here.

They move to the table and chairs. Person 1 is wobbly, person
2 helps them along. They sit at the table.

The barstaff come back into set, they look at person 1 and 2

BARSTAFF

They alright?

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

Bit too much I think

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST) (CONT'D)

(to Person 1)

Want me to get you a cab?

PERSON 1 (MIDDLE)

I think, i.. Yes I think you'd
better

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

(To barstaff)

Any chance you could call them a
cab, I've left my phone at home

BARSTAFF

Sure, where you heading
mate/love?

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

Civic Close

BARSTAFF

Cheers

Barstaff leaves the set

Person 2 sits at the table and finishes their beer

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

Then I thought, what if I go back further. Collect my younger self, take them forwards

Person 1 collapses on the table, head in arms, down looking at the table. Face obscured.

Person 2 does not even flinch

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST) (CONT'D)

So I collect my younger self, go forward and my younger self does the deed. So worse case I still get to live my life for another twenty years. Best case we cut to another universe but the disaster is averted.

Person 2 stands up, picks up their glass, walks between the bar and person 1. They lean over and check the pulse of person 1 then they turn their back so they are facing the bar. Cutting of the view between the bar and the table/person 1.

The bar staff reenter the set, glance over but they can't see enough of the table.

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST) (CONT'D)

I think they needed to sleep it off

BARSTAFF

You having another?

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

Nah, I've got to go. Cheers though. If he wakes tell him I said goodbye

BARSTAFF

I couldn't help but overhear. You do know that is still a paradox right? They just can't kill themselves without it becoming paradoxical, what about the oldest version, what do they do? They can't go back that world wont exist

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

Aye, it's true. It is all theoretical anyway. Who knows maybe they walk outside into a brave new world they live a life as a recluse and never bother anyone ever again. I don't think it matters really. The oldest and youngest keep on living, they saved the world and nobody will ever know. What is one life when weighed against billions?

BARSTAFF

Pfffy, bit cliché ain't it

PERSON 2 (YOUNGEST)

Ah, it's a cliché because it is true.

Person 2 leaves the set, the barstaff grabs their pint glass and turns away.

FIN.