

THE END

By Kristyn Leigh Robinson

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ISBN: 1-60003-328-8

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PRODUCTION NOTES

The End was originally produced in August 2006 at Speaking Ring Theatre Company in Chicago, IL, where it was directed by Kevin Gladish, with the following cast:

Rachel: Adair McDonald
Counter Girl: Jessica Zweig
Benny: Aaron Walters
Benny's Wife: Emily Korff

The play made its Off-Off-Broadway debut at the American Globe Theatre in New York, NY, where it was directed by Kristyn Robinson, with the following cast:

Rachel: Heather Ferrel
Counter Girl: Angela Dalecki
Benny: Brian Couch
Benny's Wife: Janna Kefalas

The play has also been produced at the following theatres:

Two Spoons Theatre Company (New York, NY), October 2006
Café Theatre Company (Montclair, NJ), February 2007
Studio 400's Short Attention Span Theatre (Pensacola, FL)
February 2008
Wilmington Drama League (Wilmington, DE), February 2008
Theatre Unleashed (Los Angeles, CA), June 2008
BACCA One-Act Play Festival (Long Island, NY), June 2008

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CHARACTERS

RACHEL
BENNY
BENNY'S WIFE
COUNTER GIRL

RACHEL sits at a coffee shop table. SHE is reading a book. After a few beats SHE looks up and speaks to the audience.

RACHEL: Here's how it happens. I'm sitting in a coffee shop. Somewhere trendy, one of those places where it takes you longer to say the name of your coffee than it does to drink it. I'm reading a book. Something from the *Times* best-seller list. My hair is perfect, my make-up is perfect, clothes are perfect. I've lost some weight – you know, just enough to look good, not emaciated like those models in *Vogue* or *Cosmo*. Let's just say, I've never looked better. Then he comes in.

(BENNY enters.)

He looks . . . good. Better than I remember him. *(SHE gets lost in it for a minute.)* He looks so good . . . *(a beat, then SHE snaps out of it)* No, I mean, he looks bad. Really bad. He looks . . . slightly disheveled, or something. He comes in and he looks around.

(HE does.)

RACHEL: He sees me. I, of course, pretend I don't notice him. His face lights up with a smile of affectionate recognition, then melts into this expression of . . . of . . . of wistful, hopeful sadness.

(BENNY does all this.)

RACHEL: Unsure how to approach me, he lets his gaze wander the restaurant. The menu board behind the counter catches his eye. The idea strikes him. A triple chocolate caramel half-caf mocha latte! *(almost an aside)* That was the drink he always got me when he wanted to win me over after a fight.

THE END – Page 4

(BENNY'S eyes light up.)

RACHEL: He crosses the room, headed for the counter. Wait. No.

(BENNY, who has crossed to the counter, stops.)

RACHEL: He *confidently saunters* across the room toward the counter.

(BENNY goes back to where he entered, then confidently saunters back to the counter.)

RACHEL: With a self-assured air, he tosses a five down on the counter and says, "A triple chocolate caramel half-caf mocha latte, please!"

BENNY: *(with RACHEL)* A triple chocolate caramel half-caf mocha latte, please!

COUNTER GIRL: *(with a brief glance at RACHEL, rolls her eyes, then back to BENNY)* What size?

RACHEL: Oh, uh . . .

BENNY: Oh, uh . . .

BENNY: *(after a short beat)* Large.

RACHEL: The girl at the counter takes his money and hands him the latte. He walks casually, yet purposefully, to my table. *(BENNY does this.)*

RACHEL: When I look up, I notice that I was right. He does look different. He's gained a few pounds. Lost some hair. His eyes look sad. I close my book, using my business card as a bookmark, and I say, *(SHE looks at him quizzically)* "Benny?" Then, with a longing tone in his voice, he says . . .

BENNY: Rach. Hi. You look good.

RACHEL: Thanks. *(to the audience)* He stands there awkwardly for a moment, and I let him. Then I take pity on him and say, *(SHE turns to BENNY.)* Do you want to sit down? *(to audience)* He starts to nod, to say something, but then, suddenly, his face crumples.

(BENNY's face crumples.)

RACHEL: The hand holding the latte begins to tremble.

(It does.)

RACHEL: Through his tears, he says...

BENNY: Here. I got you this. *(holds out the latte)*

RACHEL: No. No. Wait.

(BENNY'S face returns to normal.)

RACHEL: Okay. *(rattling off list)* His face crumples, his hand begins to tremble, and then he puts the latte on the table because he's afraid he'll spill it, then he sits *down*. *(back to normal)* And then he takes my hand in both of his, and looks deep into my eyes and says...

BENNY: *(taking her hand in his and looking deep into her eyes)* Rach, I miss you. I made a horrible mistake. I should have been a better boyfriend. I should have paid attention. I should have called you more. I should have cuddled with you more. I should have introduced you to my parents. I should have asked you to marry me. Without you, my life is empty. I haven't been happy for one minute since the last time I saw you. I've gained weight, I've lost hair, I have boils on my –

COUNTER GIRL: *(interrupting, disdainful)* Oh, come on.

(As SHE interrupts, BENNY drops RACHEL'S hand and his posture straightens. HE remains motionless and expressionless during the following exchange.)

RACHEL: What?

COUNTER GIRL: *Boils?*

RACHEL: Artistic license.

COUNTER GIRL: No.

RACHEL: Excuse me?

COUNTER GIRL: That's not how this works. *(comes over to wipe RACHEL's table.)*

RACHEL: I didn't realize there were rules.

COUNTER GIRL: Well, not *rules*, exactly, but, I mean, come on, you can't give the guy boils just because you're mad at him.

RACHEL: I'm *not* mad at him. *(beat)* I just... want all his teeth to fall out, so he has to suck his food through a straw.

COUNTER GIRL: Oh. Well, good. As long as you're not mad at him. *(SHE folds the towel SHE was using to wipe the table and stuffs it into the pocket of her apron.)*

RACHEL: It's just that we –

COUNTER GIRL: - Broke up. I get it. How long's it been?

RACHEL: Fourteen months.

COUNTER GIRL: Wow.

RACHEL: Is that too long?

COUNTER GIRL: Too long?

RACHEL: Yeah. You know, too long...to be...

COUNTER GIRL: Well, I'm no one to judge. I once shaved my ex-boyfriend's cat a year after we broke up.

THE END – Page 6

RACHEL: Then you understand.

COUNTER GIRL: Well, it didn't make his teeth fall out. So. What's the deal with Bradley?

RACHEL: Benny. *(after a pause)* Benny... cheated on me. *(beat)* I don't think I've ever said that out loud before. Anyway, I wish I could say that was why I broke up with him. I was stupid. It wasn't until five months later... when he married her... that I figured it out.

COUNTER GIRL: Ouch.

RACHEL: *(with a dismissive shrug)* I'm working through it.

COUNTER GIRL: Well... don't let me get in your way. What happens next?

RACHEL: Well, usually he begs me to take him back and I reject him, but that seems kinda hokey.

COUNTER GIRL: Mmmm.

RACHEL: Besides, Benny isn't the begging type. No. No, that isn't how it happens.

(BENNY exits.)

COUNTER GIRL: So no coffee shop, then?

RACHEL: Oh, no, I'm still in a coffee shop. But this time . . . I'm on my cell phone. I'm negotiating a huge business deal. *(takes out HER cell phone)* Oh, and it's raining outside.

(There is thunder and the sound of rain falling.)

RACHEL: Benny comes in. He's soaked, because he forgot his umbrella again.

(BENNY enters. His hair is wet.)

RACHEL: I said soaked.

(BENNY opens his mouth to speak, and COUNTER GIRL throws a glass of water on him.)

COUNTER GIRL: How's that?

(BENNY coughs.)

RACHEL: Well, it made *me* feel good. Anyway, I see him before he sees me. He's in line at the counter. I end my phone call and walk over.

(SHE does all this).

RACHEL: *(to BENNY)* Hi, Benny.

BENNY: *(turns, surprised)* Hi, Rachel. Wow. I – you look . . . good.

RACHEL: Thanks. You look . . . wet.

BENNY: Yeah, I didn't watch The Weather Channel.

RACHEL: *(to COUNTER GIRL)* He *never* watched The Weather Channel.

BENNY: So how *are* you?

RACHEL: I'm doing really well, thanks. Business is great. Just closed a multi-million-dollar deal, have another one in the works and an interview with *Forbes* later this afternoon –

COUNTER GIRL: Hold it.

RACHEL: *Now* what?

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