

A Moment's Pause

A One-Act Play

By Tim Mogford

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Ellie is at a party and wanders off to find the bathroom. The room she walks into, however, is not what she expected at all and she soon realizes that she can't get out. Worse, she is quickly surrounded by three mysterious figures who seem to hold her life in the balance. One condemns her, one defends her, and the third seems to be a judge of some kind. Ellie must persuade the judge that the "moment's pause" she took before making one crucial decision justifies a second chance. This compelling and powerful piece offers four varied and meaty roles in a play sure to strike a chord with all audiences.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

This play was first performed at the National SADD Conference in Orlando, Florida on June 28, 2010. The cast was as follows:

ELLIE: Taylor Reber

JILL: Alex Casper

BRIDGET: Madison Houck

SARAH: Taryn Schlitzer

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4 w)

ELLIE: A brittle, bright and confused teen girl.

JILL: The “defense,” warm, persistent and engaging.

BRIDGET: The “prosecution,” sharp, ironic and dynamic.

SARAH: The “judge,” authoritative, compassionate and decisive.

SETTING

One chair is DSC. Three more, behind small school-style desks, surround it DSL, USC and DSR. If possible, the desk and chair USC are raised. Maybe there are plastic cups and bottles, some basic office touches scattered about.

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(AT RISE: Enter ELLIE, SR. She is dressed nicely but disheveled – her hair messed, shirt partially untucked. She seems very confused, and backs her way in. She turns quickly and briefly explores the room. She establishes that there is no exit at the rear or SL, and then returns SR and stops, perplexed. The entrance she just used now seems to have disappeared. She returns to the center of the room and tries to get herself together.)

ELLIE: Hello? *(Pause, then louder, directed up at some invisible presence.)* Hello?! *(Pause.)* OK - this isn't funny, you know. No one's laughing, in case you hadn't noticed! *(Pause, she moves SR again.)* OK, where's the door? There was a door right here. I know. I walked through it. *(Pause.)* What did you do with it? *(To herself.)* Well, that sounds *really* stupid. There *must* be a door. *(Loudly again.)* There must be a door! *(She moves SR and looks intently. She shouts again.)* Otherwise, I wouldn't have been able to get in. Right? *(Returning CS.)* I mean I must have walked in somehow, right?

(Enter JILL SL, quickly, quietly and unseen.)

ELLIE: *(Cont'd.)* There is a way out somewhere, isn't there? *(She sits in the chair. To herself.)* OK – this is weird. Who are you talking to? You're losing it. There are no doors, apparently. And there's nobody here.

JILL: Sure there is. *(With a winning smile, she moves to the table SL and puts down the files she is holding.)*

ELLIE: Whoa! Where'd you come from? You scared me.

JILL: *(Very concerned.)* Oh, no! No, I'm sorry – I certainly didn't mean to do *that*. *(Her manner is warm and excessively conciliatory towards Ellie.)*

ELLIE: Yeah, well. I'm glad to see someone else. It's good to know I'm not actually *dreaming* here.

JILL: Yeah. That's good to know.

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(Pause.)

ELLIE: I mean I'm *not* dreaming, right?

JILL: *(Smiling.)* Not dreaming.

ELLIE: I don't think I'm dreaming.

JILL: Then I don't either.

ELLIE: What?

JILL: What?

(Pause.)

ELLIE: No – you're here. Two people can't share the same dream. I'm just in a room without any doors. No – it has a door. *(SHE quickly moves SL.)* Of course it does. You came - *(At the side of the stage she stops, perplexed. She can't see a door.)* OK, how'd you do it? What's the trick? How did you get in?

JILL: What trick?

ELLIE: There's some magic door handle that lets you in. Right?

JILL: I guess.

ELLIE: I mean, you got in. I got in. No one gets in here without opening a door.

JILL: *(Strangely emphatic. ELLIE does not notice.)* That's very true.

ELLIE: *(Confused.)* Where is here?

(Pause.)

JILL: *(Looking up from her notes.)* Did you say something?

ELLIE: I asked you where we are. I was at – a party. I *am* at a party. I must have been looking – for the bathroom. This isn't a bathroom.

JILL: No, it isn't. You're right.

ELLIE: *(Looks relieved.)* OK. OK. I see now. Can you help me find it?

JILL: That's my job.

(Pause.)

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ELLIE: How do I get out?

JILL: It's – complicated.

ELLIE: Try me.

JILL: If you can wait just a few minutes, I'll –

ELLIE: What's the answer?

JILL: I know it must be frustrating. It might help to remember how you got in.

ELLIE: I *can't* remember how I got in!

JILL: We're going to help you with that.

ELLIE: "We"?

JILL: If you can wait –

ELLIE: – wait a few minutes. Whatever. Where's the bathroom?

JILL: Do you need the bathroom?

ELLIE: No, I just – No. (*Considers this.*) I think I *did*. Look – how did *you* get in?

JILL: In the bathroom?

ELLIE: No – here.

JILL: I work here.

ELLIE: Where *is* here?

JILL: If you can just –

ELLIE: Why can't you answer my question *now*?

JILL: Just take a moment. A moment can help.

ELLIE: Right. (*Sarcastic. She moves CS and sits in the chair.*) I was sitting here, and there was no one in the room. And then I heard a voice from over there.

(*SHE turns towards SL. Enter BRIDGET SR, unseen by Ellie. Bridget moves to the table SR. All brusqueness and efficiency.*)

ELLIE: (*Cont'd.*) And it was your voice and I was like –

JILL: (*Warmly, to BRIDGET.*) Hey, Bridget. I was hoping it would be you.

ELLIE: (*Whirling around towards this new surprise.*) What the *heck*? Don't *do* that! Where did *you* come from?

BRIDGET: (*An acknowledgement.*) Jill. How long do you think this one will take? I have another consult at 5.

ELLIE: (*Irritably.*) I *said* – where did *you* –

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BRIDGET: *(She's reading from her folder.)* Calm down.

ELLIE: What?

BRIDGET: *(Looking at her notes with some irritation.)* You need to be patient.

ELLIE: What are you talking about?

BRIDGET: Take a moment. Pull yourself together.

JILL: Ellie –

ELLIE: *(Whirls, shocked.)* Excuse me? Do I know you?

JILL: No, not really.

ELLIE: Then how do you know my name? Huh?

BRIDGET: It's on the case file, now relax. Sit down.

ELLIE: Who *are* you people?

JILL: Just wait two seconds, and we'll be right with you.

ELLIE: *(Exploding.)* No, *you* wait two seconds! I go off to find the bathroom at what was just turning out to be a pretty *promising* party. I open a door, and I'm here. And now I've got to deal with you two, and meanwhile I have no idea how I got in. And *you* *(To JILL.)* somehow know my *name*. I think I deserve an explanation here! *(Awkwardly.)* And some directions back to the bathroom.

(Pause. JILL and BRIDGET exchange glances. Bridget makes a "See?" gesture in Jill's direction.)

JILL: I know, I know. But look – everyone does this at first. She'll get out. She has no idea how she got in. That must count for *something*.

BRIDGET: That's why they pick you, presumably? Your sense of mindless optimism? I'd be like, boom – boom. *(Scathing look at ELLIE.)* Next case. That one outburst would do it for me.

ELLIE: Hey! What do you think you're –

BRIDGET: You be silent! *(She doesn't shout, but she is in firm control here. ELLIE stops, surprised at her own instinctive reaction.)* It all works for me, you know. *(To JILL.)* You'd better tell her to keep quiet, Jill. She doesn't think.

ELLIE: *(Pause. Then respectfully, through gritted teeth.)* Excuse me?

End of Freeview

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