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Until He Wasn't

By

PATRICK MCLAUGHLIN

Dramatic Publishing Company

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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PATRICK MCLAUGHLIN

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(UNTIL HE WASN'T)

ISBN: 978-1-61959-213-1

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Until He Wasn't was first produced at MadLab in Columbus, Ohio, on Oct. 6, 2016.

CAST:

Natalie..... Kasey Meininger
Raya Laura Spires
Gavin..... Will Macke
Tenille Jenn Feather Youngblood
Colin..... Rob Philpott
Victoria..... Sheree Evans

PRODUCTION:

Director Audrey Rush
Assistant Director..... Sheree Evans
Lighting Design Brendan Michna
Sound Design Peter Graybeal
Scenic Design..... Audrey Rush
Costumes and Props Melissa Blair
Booth Operator and House Manager Maddie Conley
Assistant..... Michael Moore
Production Photographer Michelle DiCeglio
Flyer Design..... Erik Sternberger
Set Crew Amanda Bauer, Greg McGill,

Sheree Evans, Casey May, Brendan Michna,
Stephen Woolsey, Colleen Dunne, Vicki Kessler,
Andy Woodmansee, Lance Atkinson, Shana Kramer,
Brad Shimp, Kyle Jepson, Cat McAlpine,
Hannah Woods, Bruce Coates, Michah Jenkins

Until He Wasn't

CHARACTERS

Natalie: 25-35, confident, composed.

Raya: 25-35, strong and defiant but with a latent innocence.

Tenille: 25-35, funny and fun-loving, a bit damaged.

Gavin: 25-35, catty, sometimes funny, sometimes crass. Gay.

Colin: 30-40, handsome, charming, nearly perfect.

Victoria: 25-35, attractive and single, looking for Mr. Right.

As four strangers meet to share their personal histories with the same man, it is clear that their memories are not all pleasant ones. In sharing their experiences with him, they hint that there was more to Colin Bayley than they want to admit. There was something dark.

As Gavin and Raya recount their experiences, they realize that their incarnations of Mr. Bayley could not be more polarized. Not only do they not find the answers they are in search of, they are left with more questions.

TENILLE. You mean like ...

GAVIN. I mean like anything your twisted little mind can dream up. Judge me if you want, I don't care. It's who I am and what I like. Which is why I am a little confused. You ladies never saw that side of him? You never saw that rough, tie me up, tie me down, spank my ass until it's raw and make me beg for more, side? *(The ladies all shake their heads.)* That's interesting. I'm beginning to think that smile of his we all talk about was different for me. You guys saw a cute, quiet, confidence in that smile. You saw a guy you could fall in love with, marry, move to Scarsdale and start a family with. I saw something else. Something ...

(COLIN is now at the table L. He is staring intently at GAVIN. He is wide-eyed and almost never blinks. GAVIN turns and sees COLIN for the first time.)

GAVIN. Dangerous.

NATALIE. I'd have been scared.

GAVIN. No. Not scary dangerous. Hot dangerous. He kept staring at me. He was rubbing his hand across his throat. He kept brushing his fingers gently, back and forth across his neck like a brush.

TENILLE. I knew we'd get there eventually.

GAVIN. Get where?

NATALIE. His neck thing.

GAVIN. It wasn't just that. It was kind of a ...

NATALIE. Mating call?

GAVIN. I was going to say a signal, but ... close enough.

TENILLE. A signal for what?

GAVIN. He was letting me know that he was a gasper.

RAYA. I'm sorry. A what?

GAVIN. Gasper. It's what we call ... it means we're into ... you know. Erotic asphyxiation. We like to be choked during ...

RAYA. Yeah, I got it. Thanks.

(She pours a drink and sits on the arm of the sofa. She listens, but won't face GAVIN.)

GAVIN. A couple of minutes later, a waitress brought me a drink.

(NATALIE, now a waitress, brings GAVIN a drink.)

GAVIN *(cont'd)*. Oh, I didn't order this.

NATALIE *(as the waitress)*. It's from the guy over there. *(She points to COLIN, who smiles.)*

GAVIN. Oh. Uh ... Thank you. *(To the group.)* At this point, one thing was certain. I was definitely getting laid. That much I knew.

TENILLE. Wow. All it took was one drink to snare you?

GAVIN. One drink, one smile and ... well ...

TENILLE. And ... come on. Just say it. We all know.

GAVIN. And ... one very enticing and growing bulge in his pants.

TENILLE. Yep. I knew we'd get *there* eventually, too.

GAVIN. I didn't want to seem too anxious, so I waited thirty seconds or so before I acknowledged him.

NATALIE. Thirty whole seconds? Wow. We were wrong about you. You're not easy at all. You sir, are a rock.

GAVIN. For real though, right? I raised my glass and nodded.
A minute later, I went to the men's room. I wanted to check myself in the mirror.

(He moves R and mimes looking in a mirror and checking his appearance as he speaks. As he does this, COLIN moves to the sofa and takes GAVIN's seat. RAYA stands and turns to watch from behind the sofa. She now stares at COLIN.)

GAVIN *(cont'd)*. When I got back, something else had been delivered. Colin Bayley, his smile and his bulge were now sitting in my seat.

COLIN. You know when someone buys you a drink, it's customary to say thank you.

GAVIN. I did.

COLIN. You most certainly did not.

GAVIN. I gave you the raised glass, head nod. *(He acts it out.)* I got nothing from you.

COLIN. Except that drink.

GAVIN. I gave you my nod. I wasn't sure what to think. I gave you my nod and then got nothing. It's customary to nod back when someone gives you the raised glass, head nod. Ever since then I've been racking my brain. What do I have to do to get this guy's knob ... NOD! NOD! I meant nod.

COLIN. Wow. You just put shit right out there don't you?

GAVIN. I didn't mean it like that.

COLIN. Yes you did.

GAVIN. This is not how I ...

COLIN. I like that. Be open about what you want. It's refreshing. Just put it out there. Why waste time beating around the bush? I believe you should just take life by the balls. *(He puts his hand inside GAVIN's thigh and caresses it.)* Don't you?

GAVIN. Yes. *(To the group.)* So I did. I took a chance, anyway. It was chilly that night, and he was wearing a scarf. It was this blue and green plaid. It looked like it had definitely seen better days.

(TENILLE notices the scarf for the first time.)

TENILLE. Oh Jesus. You cannot be serious.

RAYA. What?

TENILLE. That's my scarf. That was the scarf from our date.

NATALIE. You mean?

TENILLE. He must have taken it. Such a bastard.

RAYA. Christ, really? Knowing what you know now, are you honestly surprised at anything he would do? Can we just get through this? Please?

GAVIN. So ... I took the scarf and tied a little knot. *(He does so.)* I slowly cinched it up until it was right up to his neck. He smiled.

COLIN. How about a change of scenery?

(They begin to walk out. COLIN exits, but GAVIN stays.)

NATALIE. Seriously? Just like that?

GAVIN. A willing bottom who likes to be choked? Please. I'm surprised it took that long. Anyway, he had this little apartment a few blocks away. Now say what you will, but he was consistent if nothing else. *We* never made it to the bedroom either. A few seconds later, the bulge was in play, the scarf was around *my* neck, and I was on my way to heaven.

RAYA *(laughing)*. Just fantastic.

TENILLE. What's so funny?

RAYA. It's not funny. It's really, really sad.

GAVIN. What?

RAYA. I was thinking about our wedding vows. That part about forsaking all others obviously didn't apply to fetish queens ... or anybody else for that matter.

TENILLE. This might sound a little cliché, but it's not your fault. Any of this. This is about him. You know that, right?

RAYA. That is one of the hardest parts of this whole thing. Knowing it was never really about me. He made it seem like it was *all* about me. Everything. He made it seem like everything he did—every moment, every movement and every word—was about me. *For* me. Finding out none of that was true has been the hardest part of this entire thing.

NATALIE. Even harder than ...

RAYA. Yes.

TENILLE. So do we get to hear it? I mean, you married him. Your story must be great.

RAYA. Why not? It doesn't matter anymore anyway, right?

GAVIN. How did you meet?

RAYA. You'll love this. He was my next-door neighbor.

TENILLE. Oh my God. You're kidding me.

RAYA. Seriously. You can't make this shit up. He moved in next door. Our apartments were on the ground floor of this small building and had these little adjoining patios. I had been out of town for five days and didn't know he had moved in. At first, I didn't know what to think of him.

(COLIN is now sitting at a table R. The area is now his patio. He is playing a small keyboard and sipping coffee.)

RAYA (*cont'd*). I get back to town, and there is this really cute guy on the patio next to mine playing this keyboard, drinking coffee and just being ... wonderful. I didn't introduce myself or even say hi. I just waited until the music started. It was like clockwork. Every night at seven. I would stand at the sliding glass door and watch him.

GAVIN. He never spotted you?

RAYA. No. Or so I thought. I mean if I knew he had seen me I would have freaked out, run to my bedroom and hid under my blankets. As far as I knew, I was as stealthy as a cat. I could just watch him. Every night it was the same. Him, his keyboard and a small French press. I had finally worked up the courage to approach him. It was a Thursday night. True to form, my private concert started promptly at seven. After a minute or so, I slowly slid my door open and stepped outside. I wasn't sure what to say to him so I just listened and tried not to make a sound. And then I realized I had been missing out on something. A breeze blew by and for the first time I smelled him.

NATALIE. I remember that. Jesus, he smelled good. He smelled like ... I don't even know. He just smelled ...

RAYA. Like a man should.

TENILLE. Yeah.

RAYA. As soon as he took a break to pour his coffee, I stepped quietly to where our patios met. I didn't know what to say, so I just asked him something that had been on my mind for a while. (*To COLIN.*) How do you do that?

COLIN. I'm sorry?

RAYA. I didn't mean to startle you.

COLIN. You didn't. I knew you were there.

RAYA. If you knew I was there, why didn't you say anything?

COLIN. OK, now that's just rude.

RAYA. What is?

COLIN. You have been standing at your door watching me every night since I moved in here. You've pretty much been spying on me and invading my privacy, but *I'm* the one who needed to speak up? Why haven't *you* said anything?

RAYA. What was I supposed to say?

COLIN. I don't know. "Hello" would have been nice. "Welcome to the building" wouldn't have been asking too much. We might have even worked our way up to "my name is fill in the blank."

RAYA. I am really sorry. I just hear you playing every night and I wanted to tell you how much I enjoy it and instead I've become this giant asshole.

(A moment passes in silence.)

RAYA *(cont'd)*. OK. This is the part where you say, "No, you're not an asshole."

COLIN. But ... you kinda *were* an asshole.

RAYA. Pardon me?

COLIN. Spying on me. Not welcoming me to the building. Treating me like I did something wrong. Never tipping me after my show. Those are all asshole moves if you ask me.

RAYA. Wow. I'm sorry. That's not what I ... I mean ... OK. Sorry to bother you. I'm just going to go inside and drink some drain cleaner now. *(To the group.)* I turned around and headed inside to bury my head under about thirty pillows. Just as I slid the door open, he spoke.

COLIN. How do I do what?

RAYA. Huh?

COLIN. You wanted to know how I did something. What?

RAYA. Does this mean that I'm not an asshole anymore?

COLIN. Don't put words in my mouth. But you did ask a question and the polite thing to do is answer. So ... how do I do what?

RAYA. How do you play like that?

COLIN. I've been playing since I was a kid.

RAYA. No. I mean without looking.

COLIN. I don't follow.

RAYA. Obviously, you know I've been watching you. You're amazing, by the way. But I noticed one thing. You never look down at the keys. How do you do that?

COLIN. Oh that. Um ... I really ... yeah, I don't know. I just play. *(He stands and goes to the edge of his patio next to RAYA's.)* I'm Colin, FYI.

RAYA. I'm Raya. Welcome to the building, Colin.

COLIN. Raya. That's pretty. A regular Ray-A-Sunshine. See? That was nice. OK, you're off the asshole list. I am officially upgrading you to stuck-up bitch.

RAYA. Hey!

COLIN. I'm just kidding. It's nice to meet you, Raya.

RAYA. Thank you very much for that. I meant what I said, you know? You're really good. I could never do that. My eyes would be glued to the keys just playing chopsticks. It's almost second nature to you.

COLIN. Like I said, I've been playing a long time. I guess the best way to explain it is that playing the piano is like ... well, pardon me for saying it, but ... it's like making love for the first time. It starts out a little clunky, but eventually ... you learn to just feel your way through. Enough time passes and you know that lover like the back of your hand. You know exactly where and how to touch her without thinking about it.

RAYA. Good answer, Colin.

COLIN. I thought so.

RAYA. So where did you come from?

COLIN. Tallahassee. Boise before that. Milwaukee before that. And originally, San Jose.

RAYA *(to the group)*. I didn't really care where he was from. He could have said he was fresh out of the penitentiary and I would have been just as taken with him.

COLIN. And you?

RAYA. I'm an Ohio girl. Born and raised in Columbus. I moved here after college.

COLIN. So now that we officially know each other, you don't have to hide in the shadows. It was beginning to get a little creepy to tell you the truth. Feel free to come out and listen anytime you like.

RAYA. I will. And you feel free to change things up a bit. How about a little jazz tomorrow night?

COLIN. Sorry, Raya. I don't take requests.

RAYA. We'll see about that. (*She turns to head inside.*)

COLIN. You know ... and this is just a thought. Tomorrow night, you could come over here while I play. Maybe we could have some coffee and talk in between songs. RAYA.

Sorry, Colin. I don't take requests either.

COLIN. We'll see about *that*.