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Stephan Jean De Jonghe

- *Free Coffee For The Driver*

A One Act Play – Comedy

Running Time: approx. 25 minutes

Period: Present Day

Synopsis:

A one act comedy with a twist.

This one act play is set in a remote country café. Two weary travelers stop for a meal. Clearly they are at odds with each other. Slowly, Julie the waitress pieces together the bizarre relationship and then the action really starts. This dark drama has a hint of black comedy.

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About the Playwright: Stephan Jean De Jonghe



Stephan returned to community theatre in 2004 as Stage Manager for KADS *Brimstone and Treacle*. That led to a meeting with Di Day whom recruited Stephan as her Stage Manager for *Agency* performed at the Blue Room in the same year.

Inspired by Di's success Stephan wrote his first play *Death Warmed Up* which was presented at KADS in 2007 under the direction of Joy Northover. Since then Stephan has written and produced several shows including *Meals Warmed Up*, *A Lovely Lobster Tale*, *Follicle Farm*, *Hypno-me*, *Free Coffee For the Driver* and *Fair Suck of the Sauce Bottle*.

Stephan has acted in plays at KADS, Garrick and Marloo. He is a committed playwright, director and actor.

About the Play:

Free Coffee For The Driver was first performed at the Town Square Theatre, home to Kalamunda Dramatic Society (KADS) in Kalamunda, Western Australia during the one act season, from August 29 to September 6, 2008, and directed by Stephan Jean De Jonghe.

The show also performed at the South West Drama Festival in Bunbury, Western Australia and the ITA State Drama Festival hosted by Old Mill Theatre, South Perth, Western Australia in 2008. Actress Esther Wall was nominated for Best Actress in a Lead Role.

This show was also performed at St Catherine's College, University of Western Australia and at the Mandurah One Act Festival at Mandurah Performing Arts Centre with the original cast, both in April 2009.

The original 2008 cast:

Lisa	Esther Wall
Rob	Graham Miles
Julie	Joy Northover
Director	Stephan J. De Jonghe

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***Free Coffee For The Driver* by Stephan Jean De Jonghe**

The play is set mid afternoon, in a café in the country. It is remote and serves as a café, shop and fuel station along a remote highway.

Cast:

LISA Approximately 30 and is not an educated person. She is easily confused and needy of men and attention. She is dressed in a shirt, shorts and boots.

ROB Mid 40's and is clean cut, semi-educated and likes to be in control. He is dressed in a white collared shirt, jeans and leather shoes.

JULIE Late 40's and is polite, interested in the lives of other people and works long hours at the café, often on her own. She is dressed in a plain dress with an apron and sensible shoes.

SARGEANT BANKS of the Federal Police. Cameo role.

On stage is one table with two chairs. There is a chequered tablecloth and the remnants of a meal. To one side there is a mirror on a stand. Lisa and Rob are seated, waiting for coffee that will be brought in by Julie.

During the play, crows and magpies are heard calling and long distance freight trucks are heard passing the cafe. Occasionally a dog is heard barking.

(Julie enters carrying two coffee cups. She places them on the table before Lisa and Rob)

JULIE: Have you finished your meal?

LISA: Yeah, *(she smiles)* thanks.

JULIE: I'll gather these up, then. *(She clears the plates and cutlery)*

LISA: It was lovely, and so kind of you to do this for us at this time of the day.

JULIE: That's okay. You're very welcome. I enjoy cooking, especially for appreciative customers. You sit back and relax.

(Julie exits)

LISA: *(Stretching out)* That was so nice of her.

ROB: It was spaghetti with sauce! Big deal.

LISA: You said you liked it.

ROB: I did like it. I just don't see what the fuss is about.

LISA: She even put coriander in it. You like coriander.

ROB: So?

LISA: Isn't it nice that all the way out here you can get a plain old bowl of spaghetti, and it comes with coriander.

ROB: *(Sarcastically)* I like apple pie too but I don't see any of that on the menu!

LISA: I thought it was right to thank her.

ROB: What else did you expect? It's her job. We're paying her to do this.

LISA: *(Hurt)* Yeah, but. I suppose at this time of the day she...

ROB: It's a café! Of course she's supposed to. *(Pause)* It doesn't look like they get a lot of customers.

LISA: This place isn't so bad.

ROB: It's a dump. *(Pause)* I reckon she'd be grateful to have something to do.

LISA: She seems nice.

ROB: I'll bet she's not.

LISA: You're mean.

ROB: *(Angrily)* You watch your mouth! I'm feeding you; taking care of you, aren't I?

LISA: Yes, Rob. *(She looks down and sullen)*

ROB: Show some respect.

LISA: Yes, Rob.

ROB: *(Calling out)* Could we have some sugar in here!

(Lisa gives him the look)

ROB: Please.

(Julie enters with sugar in a bowl)

JULIE: Here you go.

ROB: *(Sarcastically)* Thank you.

(Julie exits)

(Rob opens the sugar bowl and puts sugar into his coffee)

LISA: See!

ROB: What?

LISA: Raw sugar?

ROB: That's what I use. What of it?

LISA: You didn't ask for raw sugar. It's a bit strange...

ROB: *(Annoyed)* Listen. Maybe that's all they got. Who cares?

LISA: Why are you so nasty all the time?

ROB: I'm not nasty. If she had laid out the table properly I wouldn't have to ask, would I?

LISA: I hope we'll be leaving soon.

ROB: When I've finished my coffee.

LISA: Okay! *(Pause)* I gotta pee. I hope they've got a loo.

ROB: Of course they've got a loo. It'll be out back where they put all the shit houses in these godforsaken places.

LISA: Don't be so crude. *(She stands)* Won't be long.

ROB: And fix yourself up. You look terrible.

LISA: We've been driving for days and ... I'll do my best.

ROB: And I've been doing the driving and I still manage to look respectable.

LISA: Yes, Rob. *(Pause)* When will we be leaving?

ROB: I said 'When I've finished my coffee'. *(Pause)* I'll need to check some things in the car first, and then we'll go.

LISA: Don't forget, you gotta pay for the lunch.

ROB: I always pay for lunch. I pay for dinner, for breakfast, for the room and for the petrol. All I do is pay cos you don't have any money!

(Lisa exits)

ROB: *(Calling out)* And don't be long!

LISA: *(Off stage)* Is there a bathroom please?

JULIE: *(Off stage)* Sure. It's out the back. Go down the passage and turn left.

LISA: *(Off stage)* Thanks. *(There is the sound of footsteps receding and a door banging shut)*

(Julie enters)

JULIE: Can I get you anything else?

ROB: Yeah. How much do I owe you?

JULIE: I'll get the bill.

(Julie exits)

LISA: *(Off stage)* The doors stuck. Can you help me?

JULIE: *(Off stage)* Oh! Of course.

(There is the sound of footsteps receding and a door banging shut)

(Senior Sargent of the police enters wearing a suit. He looks hot and dishevelled and is carrying a mobile phone)

(Rob turns to look at him. He stands)

SARG: Bloody phone, no signal.

ROB: Who the fuck are you?

SARG: Senior Sargent Banks. Federal police. I've been following you for days now and I've a few questions for my enquiries. Where were...

(Rob pulls out a gun and shoots the policeman. The policeman falls to the floor. Rob puts away the gun casually and drags the body of stage right. There are footsteps as Julie returns. He returns to the table and stirs his coffee and sips)

(Julie enters)

JULIE: I thought I heard a bang?

ROB: The chair fell.

(They stare at each other)

JULIE: Is your wife okay?

ROB: She's not my wife.

JULIE: Sorry, your girlfriend?

ROB: Not that it's any of your business, but she's not my girlfriend.

JULIE: Friend, then.

ROB: Her husband died and I'm taking her to her mother's. Is that okay with you?

JULIE: Oh, I'm sorry.

ROB: What is it with women and being sorry?

JULIE: I beg your pardon?

ROB: You said you were sorry when I told you her husband died. Did you kill him?

JULIE: Of course not!

ROB: Of course not! Of course not! But still, you're sorry.

JULIE: I'm sorry for her. She seems nice.

ROB: Nice. Nice. She's a pain in the arse. God knows why I'm helping her.

JULIE: Everyone needs help at some time.

ROB: I'll never understand women.

JULIE: It's none of my business, but she seems to need your help.

ROB: You're right. It's none of your business.

(They stare at each other)

ROB: Now bring me the bill so I can pay you. *(Pause)* Please.

JULIE: Sure.

(Julie exits)

(Rob rests his coffee impatiently and drinks)

(There is the sound of a door banging and footsteps approaching)

(Lisa enters)

LISA: There. All spruced up.

ROB: *(Looking at her)* I can't tell.

LISA: *(Sitting)* I can't seem to please you. You're always angry with me. Even after I...

ROB: Look, just because we had sex, doesn't mean I like you. I enjoy you but then I enjoy other women too. It helps to pass the nights until I can get you to your mother's.

LISA: And then you have to pay me.

ROB: And then I'll pay you. *(Pause)* I'm not paying for the sex. That was your idea. I don't pay for that.

LISA: I'm not a whore!

ROB: And I don't do whores, so at least we got that straight.

LISA: Are we leaving soon?

ROB: As soon as that dumb ass of a waitress brings me the bill.

LISA: She's not a dumb ass. She's nice.

ROB: *(Sarcastically)* She's nice. She's nice. Christ!

LISA: You're so mean.

ROB: She's taking forever. How long does it take to work out the cost of two meals and two coffees?

LISA: One coffee.

ROB: What?

LISA: One coffee. Yours should be free.

ROB: What are you talking about?

LISA: The sign outside said 'Free coffee for the driver'.

ROB: No shit. *(Pause)* She's still taking forever. *(He stands looking toward the kitchen)*

LISA: Maybe she has other things to do.

ROB: Women. Always defending each other. I'll never understand it.

(He takes out his wallet. He takes out \$50 and drops it on the table)

ROB: *(They stare at each other)* For the meal!

LISA: Oh.

ROB: Look. I'm going to the car and check on a few things. You give her this and I'll meet you outside.

LISA: Yes Rob.

(Rob exits)

(Lisa takes a sip of the coffee but it's cold and she quickly puts it down)

(Julie enters carrying a slip of paper)

JULIE: Is your coffee cold? Can I get you another?

LISA: No, it's okay. We have to get going anyway.

JULIE: You sure?

LISA: Yeah. *(Pause)* You must get lonely out here?

JULIE: Not really. I'm not normally on my own. Earl's in town picking up supplies.

LISA: Is Earl your husband?

JULIE: Earl! God no. He owns this place. I live down the road. I work for wages, not for love.

LISA: Rob left this for you. *(She indicates the money)*

(Julie picks it up)

JULIE: I'll find you some change. *(She moves to exit)*

LISA: Keep it.

JULIE: What? *(Stopping and looking at her)*

LISA: I said 'Keep the change'. We've got plenty.

JULIE: You sure? Your friend doesn't look the sort to leave a tip.

LISA: Yeah. He can be rude. *(Pause)* I think you deserve a really big tip for putting up with him.

JULIE: It's a pity you two don't get along.

(There is a long pause)

LISA: It's not for too much longer.

JULIE: Where are you heading?

LISA: He's taking me to my mother's.

JULIE: That's nice. You got far to go?

LISA: Rob said we'd be driving for another two days.

JULIE: *(Sitting at the table)* He said your husband died.

LISA: Yeah. *(Pause)* You ask a lot of questions.

JULIE: I'm sorry. *(She stands)* I wasn't prying.

LISA: No! I'm sorry. *(She motions for her to sit down again and Julie does)* Please don't go. I don't get much of a chance to talk and you seem nice.

JULIE: You kind of remind me of me.

LISA: *(She smiles)* Why?

JULIE: We've both had a hard time with men. I couldn't help over hearing the two of you arguing.

LISA: Are you married?

JULIE: Once. He's dead now. No one ever found his body. So it's just the kids and me.

LISA: How'd he die?

JULIE: No one knows. He disappeared 7 years ago and no one has ever seen him since. I've managed to have him declared legally dead. I get on with my life. You know how it is.

LISA: How many kids you got?

JULIE: Two... precious girls. My mum looks after them at home while I work.

LISA: Do you have a photo? I'd love to see them.

JULIE: Err, no. *(Really flustered)* I normally do, of course, but not today, I...

LISA: I'm sorry. I shouldn't...

JULIE: It's nice that he's taking you to your mother's.

LISA: Yeah. I haven't seen her in a while. We don't get on very well.

JULIE: That's too bad. Mums and daughters often have problems...

LISA: At least I got a mum. Rob's parents died when he was very young.

JULIE: That's too bad too. I....

(There is the sound of the front door opening to the shop)

(Rob calls from off stage)

ROB: Hello. Can I have some service?

(Julie rises from the table as Rob enters from the shop section)

JULIE: Yeah! What do you want?

ROB: We've got a flat tyre. *(Pause)* You need to tell your boss to clean up out there.

JULIE: What? I don't understand.

ROB: There's nails and shit all over the place. He should be more responsible.

JULIE: There isn't a mechanic.

ROB: You got a jack?

JULIE: Have a look in the garage.

ROB: Thanks. *(Pause)* *(To Lisa)* Won't take long.

LISA: Sure. Whatever.

(Rob exits)

LISA: You miss your husband?

JULIE: Miss him! Not likely. *(Julie sits at the table)* I certainly don't miss being beaten up every second day. Sometimes he'd beat me in case I'd done something wrong that he didn't know about.

LISA: That's terrible.

JULIE: I made sure he never hurt my girls. I took it for them. *(Pause)* But that's all over now.

LISA: I'm glad for you.

JULIE: What about you?

LISA: Mine wasn't much of a marriage either. Mum tried to warn me about Steve, but then... I thought I was in love. You know how it is.

JULIE: Men are bastards. All sweetness when they want you.

LISA: Oh, Steve was a bastard all right. Rob's mean, but he's been nicer to me than Steve was.

JULIE: It sounds like you've had it rough.

LISA: All my life.

JULIE: If you don't mind me asking, how did your husband die?

LISA: He fell. *(Sounding vague)* The weird thing is that even though I saw it happen, I don't really understand it. *(Pause)* Rob's worried, so I'm making sure that he's going to pay me.

JULIE: Why? What happened?

LISA: I don't know that I should be telling you.

JULIE: *(Standing)* I didn't mean to pry. You said you needed to talk, and you seem nice. *(Turning)* I'll leave you to your business.

LISA: I'm sorry. Please stay. *(Pause)* I haven't been able to talk with anyone since it happened. Rob's been with me night and day...

JULIE: *(Sitting)* When did it happen?

LISA: Two weeks ago. It seems longer, what with the police and the funeral and all.

JULIE: How well do you know Rob?

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Please see over for Properties, Costumes and Sound Effects list.

Free Coffee For The Driver

Properties list

Small table
Two chairs
Tablecloth
Serving tray
Two plates
Two sets of cutlery
Two coffee cups and spoons
Serviette dispenser
Sugar bowl with raw sugar
Two pistols
A wad of money
A menu board 'Earls fine foods' with a spag bol special on the list.
Front door cow bell.

Costumes

Lisa – Shorts, t-shirt, casual shoes
Rob – Jeans, white long collared shirt, running shoes
Julie – waitress uniform with apron
Sarg – white shirt and a blood soaked shirt for the change

Sound Effects - Off stage

Creaky door opening and slamming with a ringing bell
Cash register
Magpies and crows
Dogs, birds etc,
Long distance freight trucks and trains
Sound of a car leaving in a hurry