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# Stephan Jean De Jonghe

## - *Meals Warmed Up*

A Full Length Play – 2 Acts - Black Comedy

**Running Time:** approx. 120 minutes

**Period:** Present Day

### **Synopsis:**

A delicious play of full course proportions.

Set in a 'Meals on Wheels' kitchen, the play follows the antics of the cooks and support staff of a busy kitchen. The kitchen manager, Roger, is regarded as a pirate by his new boss, Claudette and the battle lines are set early in the play. Roger must grapple with dissatisfied staff, clients and management and somehow be creative to triumph at the end of the play. A black comedy of gastronomic proportions.

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by Stephan Jean De Jonghe is copyright  
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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:

***Meals Warmed Up*** was first performed at the Town Square Theatre, home to Kalamunda Dramatic Society (KADS) in Kalamunda, Western Australia from November 13 to December 5 2009, and directed by Stephan Jean De Jonghe.

#### The original 2009 cast:

Sophie	Ann Hopwell
Annette	Diane Graham
Brian	Graham Miles
Lorinna	Helen Hopper
Roger	Kim Taylor
Maria	Lorna Mackie
Claudette	Stella Young
Shaun	Ted Simpson

#### **IMPORTANT LICENCING INFORMATION:**

This play suggests certain named songs to be played during this show. Upon a successful application to perform this play from TAZ Entertainment, your licence to perform this play will not include this music.

Your theatre will need to apply for the appropriate licence to publicly perform these songs within the play.

You will need to contact APRA to ascertain whether these songs are available for use, and obtain a dramatic context licence:

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## Meals Warmed Up by Stephan Jean De Jonghe

This play is set in a meals and wheels kitchen. It is best performed late in the year as it contains Christmas themes.

The manager of the site has a leading kitchen hand with two cooks, a dispatch supervisor, and a driver who is very athletic and good looking, and there is a food distributor rep who visits weekly to take an order for ingredients and such so that the kitchen can function. There are numerous volunteer drivers referred too, but not featured in the play. There is a council health worker whom also visits for Occupational and Health Safety matters. They do about 400 meals per day.

### Cast

Manager	Male 45 to 50 years old	Roger Gates
Kitchen Manager	Female 30 to 50 years old	Sophie Zissish
Kitchen Cook	Female 30 to 50 years old	Lorinna Peters
Kitchen Cook (New)	Female 25 to 35 years old	Maria Manaka
Dispatch Supervisor	Female 45 to 55 years old	Annette Benning
Driver	Male 25 to 30 years old	Shaun Connelly
Sales Rep	Male 45 to 50 years old	Brian Marriott
Council Health Dept.	Female 40 to 45 years old	Claudette Frena

### Cast Profiles

Roger Gates. He has been in the food industry as a cook since leaving the Navy where he was a cook. He has been managing the MOW for several years and hates the job. He likes to talk as it distracts him from the monotony of the job. His navy training, however, means that he really cares about the work they do, and the responsibility for feeding 400 meals to aged and invalid clients. He is a stirrer and annoying to others as he makes fun of people. He is quick with a joke, unless it is on him. He hates the council as they are always pressuring him for paperwork to be up to date, budgets and expense reports to be maintained. He requires additional funding but has been told he can't have any.

Sophie Zissish. Has been the kitchen manager for a very long time. She is a proud woman and has a caring nature, but worries a lot. She often does the work herself instead of delegating, as she believes that it gets done quicker and better if she does. She is tired of training new staff as she finds they leave after she trains them. The job is boring and not well paid so staff don't stay long. Plus Roger gets on their nerves, although she herself is used to it and can ignore him.

Lorinna Peters. Has been working there for over 10 years, She has seen them come and go. She is a little scared of Roger, but feels protected when Sophie is there. Doesn't have ambition and just wants to do the job and get paid. She enjoys cooking at home and is married to Peter Peters and they have 3 children, all at school. She also makes jewellery and other such crafts to give as presents, and they sometime, sell them at fairs or markets.

Maria Manaka She starts the new job today. She has worked in large kitchens before but never meals on wheels. She is single and loves music and is sketch-art student. She has had an exhibition of some of her work and has sold several sketches. She would like to meet a sensitive man whom shares her artistic passion, but so far all the artists she has met are great friends but not life partners.

Annette Benning She used to be a driver but got promoted to dispatch supervisor many years ago. She is great with the volunteers but had a run-in with the last driver, whom Roger had to ask to leave. She was nervous about Shaun starting. She and Roger both interviewed him but the two men hit it off really well and Roger persuaded her to try him out. She is married with two adult children and loves reading and going ballroom dancing with her husband.

Shaun Connelly Youngish and great looking. He considers himself suave and great with the ladies. He and Roger hit it off during the interview. Because his name sounds a bit like Sean Connery 007 they play at Shaun being a spy who is great with the ladies. Shaun is single and happy being so. Shaun just drives the truck and does the deliveries. He is helpful with the volunteers and polite to all he works with. He has only been there for two weeks but has worked as a driver for several years. He likes to dance and is very fit. He likes to go to the beach, where he can work on his tan as well feel the visual embraces of the young ladies on the beach.

Brian Marriott. Brian has been a food industry rep for several years. He once got promoted but found management beyond his style. He tries hard to please his customers and hates letting anyone down. The Meals on Wheels site is a large customer and he is there every Monday morning for an order and a coffee and chat with Roger and the ladies. They feed him and fuss and it is a great way to start the working week. Being spoilt and placing a big order makes him feel good. He is married with two adult children and enjoys a game of golf with his wife on weekends when they can.

Claudette Frena She works at the Council offices but regularly checks on things at the Meals on Wheels site. She doesn't trust Roger and thinks he should be audited more often. She would like to catch Roger up to no good but as yet Roger either isn't doing anything wrong or is just too clever for her. Whilst she is not his boss, she wants to be. She does have a lot of power over Roger, and can and wants to get him into trouble.

## Meals Warmed Up Act One - Scene One

*The play is set in a modern, open plan commercial kitchen. The day is a Monday and it's Maria's first day in a new job. In the kitchen there are workbenches, ovens, cook-tops, baking pans, pots, cooking implements, as found in a commercial kitchen. In the kitchen are Sophie and Maria. They are dressed in their cooking uniforms.*

SOPHIE: See, it's just a kitchen. Nothing fancy.

MARIA: It's a big kitchen. The last place I worked in had no room. Everything was crowded.

SOPHIE: They designed this for 2000 meals a day, but we only do about 400.

MARIA: Lucky.

SOPHIE: Not really. *(Pause)* We don't have enough staff.

MARIA: So... employ some more.

SOPHIE: Hey, we were lucky to get you. Roger said the budget wouldn't allow for more.

MARIA: How do you manage?

SOPHIE: Oh, we just do. *(Pause)* For a long time we did it all with just the two of us. Roger helps... sometimes.

MARIA: He told me he's a qualified cook.

SOPHIE: He's an ex- Navy cook. Flavour at the table.

MARIA: How do you mean?

SOPHIE: Salt, pepper and lots of different sauce bottles. *(Pause)* You add the flavour at the table.

MARIA: Oh. *(Pause)* you don't like his cooking?

SOPHIE: Not much. It's bland. You can survive on it. Just.

MARIA: *(Looking around)* What do you want me to do?

SOPHIE: Let me show you around first. And, I'll set you up with a locker.

MARIA: Ta.

SOPHIE: Lorinna will be here soon.

MARIA: Lorinna?

SOPHIE: She's the other cook. I'll introduce you around.

*(Sophie and Maria exit)*

*(Roger enters)*

ROGER: Come into the galley. You can meet Maria, our new cook.

*(Brian enters carrying a large sales folder. He has a mobile phone and a small IPAQ computer hanging off his belt)*

BRIAN: Halloo.

ROGER: I thought they'd be in here.

BRIAN: Now, what were you saying about black-coated workers?

ROGER: Prunes! Navy talk.

BRIAN: Oh. I see.

ROGER: You didn't send me any! I've got 400 desserts that I can't prepare because you didn't send me any prunes.

BRIAN: I asked at the office about them, and they didn't know what you're talking about. We don't stock dragon prunes.

ROGER: D'agen prunes. Not dragon prunes. D'agen prunes. They're canned prunes in a sweet sauce. What kind of rep are you? Don't even know prunes.

BRIAN: I thought you said dragon...

ROGER: I need 2 cartons. Please get them for me for tomorrow.

BRIAN: Okay.

ROGER: It's under the dried fruit.

BRIAN: You said it's in a can.

ROGER: I looked it up in your book. They put D'agen canned prunes in the dried fruit section.

BRIAN: *(He looks at Roger blankly)* I'm new at this.

ROGER: Bilge water. Come on, I'll make you a coffee.

BRIAN: I'm starving.

ROGER: Help yourself.

*(Roger exits)*

*(Brian grabs some bread off the bench and some honey from a cupboard. He can't find a knife so he pours a generous amount straight onto the bread. He leaves the honey on the bench. As he eats it he exits the room)*

*(Lorinna enters with Shaun. He is carrying a heavy cardboard box. He sets it on the bench)*

LORINNA: Thanks, Shaun; I'm grateful you were here. I don't like to do too much lifting.

SHAUN: Is there anything else?

LORINNA: You're a sweet boy. I'll be fine.

SHAUN: I've got to finish loading my truck. (He moves to exit)

LORINNA: You don't say much do you, Shaun?

SHAUN: No, I guess not.

LORINNA: People are entitled to their own space.

SHAUN: Yes.

LORINNA: Do you like working here, Shaun?

SHAUN: I suppose.

LORINNA: Come back when you've finished your deliveries. I'll make something nice for you to eat.

SHAUN: Sure, thanks.

*(Shaun exits)*

*(Lorinna is looking through a file. The file contains a four-weekly rotational menu)*

LORINNA: *(Reading from the file)* Fish, again. Mashed potato, peas and carrots. Peach pie and a juice.

*(Sophie and Maria enter from the staff room)*

LORINNA: Fish again.

SOPHIE: I know, I know. I'll talk to him. *(Pause)* Lorinna, this is Maria.

LORINNA: Hello, Maria. *(With a deep accent)* Welcome to boredom. *(They shake hands)*

MARIA: What did you say?

SOPHIE: It can get a little stale around here.

LORINNA: A little! This place is a cuisine void. There's no flavour, there's never anything new. It's dull and boring!

MARIA: Oh.

LORINNA: Sorry. My bad. I have to be more positive. Try again. *(Sweetly)* Welcome to the cooking team, Maria.

MARIA: Err, thanks.

SOPHIE: *(To Maria)* Let's begin.

*(Sophie goes to a freezer door with Maria and the two of them bring out trays of fish. Lorinna turns on a CD player and sounds of Pink Floyd's Dark side of the moon "Money" fill the kitchen)*

LORINNA: Fresh, fresh. When are we ever going to do fresh?

*(Sophie is showing Maria how to lie out the fish on the oven pans)*

SOPHIE: *(To Maria)* I'll be making the white sauce.

*(The rest of the song concludes at a low volume with Lorinna pouring peeled potatoes, peas and carrots into 3 giant pots on the cook top)*

LORINNA: Why do we have to do fish on a Monday?

MARIA: Isn't fish normally a Friday meal?

SOPHIE: It's Roger's way of being non-conformist. He thinks he's being radical.

MARIA: Don't people complain?

SOPHIE: Why would they?

LORINNA: This is a government department. We're not allowed to be influenced by religion.

*(They are working hard to the music)*

SOPHIE: We do get an Easter break.

LORINNA: And Christmas, so don't complain....

MARIA: Oh, I'm not complaining.

LORINNA: You should complain about the food.

*(The third stanza starts and Sophie and Lorinna join in)*

SOPHIE: *(Singing along with the third stanza)* Cooking! It's a crime. It's what we do to food in this place, all the time!

LORINNA: *(Singing)* Cooking! The Roger way. It's the root of Roger's evil way.

SOPHIE: *(Singing)* But if you ask for a change, it's no surprise, that he's giving none today. Today. Or any day...

*(Roger and Brian enter the kitchen and Roger fades the music, as the three women are busy in the kitchen)*

LORINNA: Brian.

BRIAN: Lorinna.

LORINNA: Where are our prunes? Did you eat them?

BRIAN: Tomorrow.

LORINNA: You should eat them. You look like you need them.

BRIAN: When are you going to make me an apple pie?

LORINNA: You and your apple pie.

*(Sophie turns the oven on to pre-heat)*

BRIAN: Such a nice girl.

ROGER: Brian, this is Maria. Maria, Brian.

BRIAN: Hello.

MARIA: Nice to meet you. What do you do here?

SOPHIE: He's just a rep. We feed him, give him coffee, listen to his problems...

BRIAN: I supply your food order.

ROGER: Sometimes he gets it right.

BRIAN: Thanks a lot. I'm here every Monday, bright and early, looking after you guys year after year. It's not an easy job, you know.

SOPHIE: Poor boy. Getting old.

BRIAN: *(Sadly)* I'm not as young as I used to be... *(Perks up)* But I'm not as old as I'm going to be.

ROGER: Brian, this Christmas we want to have a special treat on the menu. We want to do a cake for each client that looks a bit fun. Festive, you know. Spread some cheer.

BRIAN: Err what did you want?

ROGER: Can you find some cake moulds with a gentle, soft theme for us?

SOPHIE: Get something exciting.

BRIAN: *(Writing into his ipaq)* Gentle, soft, exciting. Got it!

ROGER: You reckon you can get them?

BRIAN: I think so. I'll check with the boss. How many do you need?

ROGER: If they're reusable tins, then fifty should do it. If they're the 'use-once only' type of moulds, we're going to need about four hundred.

SOPHIE: What designs can you get? We want something nice.

LORINNA: We want to put a smile on their faces. We want something that reminds them of happier times.

BRIAN: I'll ring the boss now. *(He moves to exit)* Excuse me, shan't be long.

*(Brian exits)*

SOPHIE: He's a nice guy. *(To Maria)* You got a man in your life?

MARIA: No. I don't seem to have much luck with them.

ROGER: Brian's tied the knot years ago.

LORINNA: I know. *(Pause)* Have you met Shaun?

MARIA: *(Shaking her head)* Who's Shaun?

LORINNA: He's our driver. He's the type you party with while you look for someone to marry.

MARIA: The man I marry must be strong, brave and independent. He must be a man I can adore, admire, respect, look up to... a man I can completely dominate.

LORINNA: Go, girl!

*(They pause)*

ROGER: Shaun's too shy to be the party type.

LORINNA: Believe me, with the ladies I'll bet he's not shy.

ROGER: He's not causing any trouble is he?

SOPHIE: He's no trouble. Besides, we can take care of ourselves.

MARIA: I've got the fish in the trays.

SOPHIE: Good, good. We bake it in the sauce. I'll show you. *(Together they get out ingredients from a shelf and measuring bowls. They prepare a sauce while Roger stirs some pots on the cook top)*

LORINNA: Roger. Could you lie out the trays?

ROGER: Sure.

*(Roger gets a tray trolley and moves the trays onto the bench. He then gets the foil containers and sets them up on the trays)*

SOPHIE: *(To Maria)* When you finish that, just pour it out over the fish.

MARIA: Do you want me to put it into the oven?

SOPHIE: Yes please. *(To Lorinna)* How are those vegies going?

LORINNA: Another 15 minutes and they'll be ready.

*(Maria and Sophie put the trays into the oven)*

SOPHIE: OKAY. Let's have a coffee. Coming, Roger?

ROGER: I'll take first watch over this. *(He stirs the pots and goes back to the trays)*

*(The three ladies exit to the staff room)*

*(Brian enters)*

BRIAN: I got the number of a company that does cake moulds. My boss says I have to pick them up and deliver direct. They'll put the charge through us so it's okay.

ROGER: What type of mould?

BRIAN: They're disposable, use once. They're not cheap.

ROGER: How much are they?

BRIAN: \$42.00 for a carton of 300. You're going to need two cartons.

ROGER: It's a one-off cost for Christmas. I'm not that much of a cheapskate.

BRIAN: We'd better do the order. I've got to go soon.

ROGER: Sure. What design are the moulds?

BRIAN: You asked for fancy moulds with a gentle theme. They said they have them. I can't get a sample without ordering a full carton and the boss won't want that.

ROGER: Oh. *(Pause)* Should be okay I guess. Look, just order them for me so we know we'll get them here in time. *(Pause)* See if you can get a photo or something.

BRIAN: Sure. Now what else do you need? *(He has his IPAQ ready to take the order)*

ROGER: Two cartons of peas. By the way, those peas you sent last week were mint peas. We lost time rinsing the mint flavour out of them.

BRIAN: I didn't think you could.

ROGER: By the number of phone calls we got. Ya can't.

BRIAN: Sorry. Could have been a wrong pick. What else?

ROGER: 20 cartons of juice.

BRIAN: Apple?

ROGER: Of course. Two bags of rice.

BRIAN: That'll be nice.

ROGER: 20 kilo of pasta.

BRIAN: Another religious experience.

ROGER: Huh?

BRIAN: Pasta. Pastor. *(Pause)* Penne?

ROGER: Doesn't matter.

BRIAN: Italian is such a beautiful language... lasagne, pizza, and al dente, primavera, manicotti...

ROGER: Cooking salt.

BRIAN: You don't like cooking with salt.

ROGER: Sophie has been complaining to me about our food. Reckons it's too bland. So we'll get the salt.

BRIAN: How in-salt-ing? What else?

ROGER: Peaches.

BRIAN: *(Singing)* Millions of peaches. Peaches for me. *(Normal voice)* How many?

ROGER: 20 cartons should do it. Don't forget the prunes.

BRIAN: Already in the system. Any tomatoes?

ROGER: No, we're right for them. Three bean mix 3 cartons, asparagus cuts 2 cartons and 2 cartons of pasta sauce.

BRIAN: Hang on. *(He is tapping away furiously on the IPAQ)*

ROGER: Got anything different than Basa? Sophie's complaining that it's boring.

BRIAN: Sure, Red Spot Emperor, Sweetlip snapper, Barramundi...

ROGER: Can you do it for the same price as Basa?

BRIAN: Get real! You ask too much!

ROGER: I don't ask for too much, I just want a lot of it! *(Pause)* Make it Basa.

BRIAN: Okay. Anything else?

*(Annette enters)*

ROGER: Should do it.

ANNETTE: Roger, can you order a new yard broom and a dustpan and brush?

ROGER: Brian, can you order a new yard broom and a dustpan and brush?

BRIAN: How's your new driver working out, Annette?

ANNETTE: Shaun's a good guy. He's a bit quiet, but hardworking.

ROGER: We haven't had any complaints from the oldies so that's a good sign.

BRIAN: This order will be out tomorrow. I've got to go. *(He moves to exit)*

ROGER: Tell them 'no mistakes', or I'll get Sophie to ring them and complain!

BRIAN: Okay, okay. No mistakes, I promise. *(Pause)* Farewell, my friends – I go to seek wisdom, truth and discuss the true meaning of life.

*(Brian exits)*

BRIAN: *(From off stage)* If you need me I'll be at the pub!

*(Shaun enters)*

SHAUN: I got the volunteers all loaded. I'm ready to get going now.

ANNETTE: Thanks Shaun.

ROGER: Shaun. Have you met Maria?

SHAUN: Not yet.

ANNETTE: Hang on! Neither have I.

ROGER: Hold tight. *(He goes to the door and calls)* Maria, can you come in here for a moment?

*(Maria enters)*

ROGER: Maria, this is Annette and this is Shaun. Annette is Shaun's supervisor and she manages the volunteers. Shaun is our driver.

SHAUN: Er... Hallo.

ANNETTE: Maria, welcome to our little family.

MARIA: Thanks Annette. *(Pause)* Shaun. We've met somewhere before, haven't we?

SHAUN: I don't know. I don't think so.

MARIA: You look familiar.

ROGER: Hey Shaun, before you weigh anchor, I want to tell you what happened to me on the weekend.

*(Sophie enters)*

SOPHIE: Oh God, not another joke.

ANNETTE: Some of them are okay...

ROGER: I was driving on the highway near the airport. As I was slowing down at the lights, I made eye contact with a Blue Heeler in a car in the other lane. He was all excited and told me he was on the way to the airport to catch a plane.

SHAUN: Ah huh.

ROGER: Yeah. He said he normally catches Frisbees... but thought he needed a bigger challenge.

*(Maria laughs but the other groan)*

SHAUN: Anyway. I better get going.

ANNETTE: Bye, Shaun. See you when you get back.

ROGER: *(Tries to mimic Shaun Connery)* Be careful with the Aston Martin, 007.

*(As Shaun exits he tries to indicate that he will and makes a gun shape out of his hand)*

MARIA: 007?

ANNETTE: His name's Shaun Connelly. Roger keeps mucking around that he's Sean Connery. You know, James Bond.

MARIA: Oh. Stirred but not shaken.

ROGER: Got to have some fun.

SOPHIE: Maria, have you finished your break?

MARIA: Just about.

SOPHIE: Well, finish up and then the three of us will get started on the desserts.

MARIA: Sure.

*(Maria exits)*

ANNETTE: Before the others get back, the three of us should talk.

ROGER: Why? What's wrong?

SOPHIE: Customers are complaining.

ANNETTE: Even more than normal. We've got to do something.

ROGER: *(Raising his voice)* Who's complaining? I never get any complaints.

ANNETTE: They're too scared to complain to you.

ROGER: *(To Annette)* How many complaints?

ANNETTE: Lots. The volunteer drivers keep telling me that clients aren't happy.

ROGER: What's wrong with them? What sort of things are they are saying.

SOPHIE: Your food is boring! Bland. Tasteless.

ROGER: They're old. Old people prefer their food bland.

SOPHIE: They're people. They'd like to enjoy what they eat.

ROGER: This is a council-run meals on wheels kitchen. They should be grateful. They can always add a bit of tomato sauce...

SOPHIE: We can do better! The point is... we need a new menu.

ANNETTE: The point is we are providing a service. They deserve to be happy. Perhaps we should look at some changes.

ROGER: Changes! Changes! I'd love to change things! The point really is... we don't have the money for changes. We're allowed to charge \$5.50 and for that we're supposed to supply a nutritious meal with a drink and a dessert. We do meals 5 days a week. The government pays us a measly \$2.00 per person.

SOPHIE: Roger.

ROGER: I've got to do hours of paperwork to prove we've delivered on those meals or we don't even get paid that.

ANNETTE: Roger.

ROGER: I can't increase our prices, so where does the money come from?

SOPHIE: We don't know! That's not our problem!

ROGER: Well, when you do, come and tell me. The menu has to stay as it is! *(He moves to exit)*

ANNETTE: Look. Let's just all think about it.

SOPHIE: We could make some sauces to spice things up a little. *(She thrusts a list at Roger)* This is what I need.

ROGER: *(Looking at the list)* This costs money. You should be happy we got Maria.

SOPHIE: I appreciate that, but it won't improve the meals. All that will change is that you'll do less in the kitchen.

ROGER: I've got paperwork to do. *(He moves to exit)*

*(Lorinna and Maria enter the kitchen)*

LORINNA: We heard shouting, is everything okay?

ROGER: No. Everything is not okay. Sophie reckons your cooking is boring!

SOPHIE: I never said that! I said your menus are...

ANNETTE: Enough! Let's just think about what we can do to improve the menu. Can we all agree to that?

ROGER: YES! *(Long pause)* I'll think about it. *(He moves to exit)*

*(Shaun enters)*

SHAUN: *(To Annette)* Ah, here you are. My truck broke down.

ROGER: What? Where? What the hell is wrong with it?

SHAUN: I think it's the fuel line. We really need to get it serviced.

ANNETTE: *(To Roger)* I warned you we needed to get that truck serviced!

ROGER: Services cost money.

ANNETTE: That's bullshit! Hiring a replacement truck while our truck gets towed away will cost a whole heap more!

ROGER: Annette. There is no need for that kind of talk. Just ring the council and get a mechanic out. The meals will be okay for an hour or so.

SHAUN: I'm going to be late with the deliveries.

ROGER: So what? It doesn't happen often. No one will complain.

ANNETTE: I'll ring for the mechanic. Where's the truck now?

SHAUN: Just down the road. By the way, that urine smell is back.

ROGER: Those dogs! They're pissing on the pole by the driveway again! I'll get onto it!

ANNETTE: I told you to put a bottle of water...

ROGER: Yes! Okay.

ANNETTE: I'll do it.

(Annette and Shaun exit)

ROGER: All right. *(Pause)* I'll look at your list. *(He holds up the list)*

SOPHIE: Good.

ROGER: Fine.

LORINNA: Maybe we should ask the customers.

ROGER: Why?

LORINNA: We'd get good info from clients. We could do a questionnaire sheet. Put it in with a return address envelope. They fill it out, put it in the envelope...

ROGER: Now everyone wants to be the manager.

SOPHIE: It's part of your job.

ROGER: I don't have the time.

MARIA: I'm pretty good with a computer. I could design something for you. If it'll help.

ROGER: I'll think about it.

*(Roger exits)*

LORINNA: He's upset.

SOPHIE: He thinks Annette and I ganged up on him.

LORINNA: Did you?

SOPHIE: He wouldn't listen otherwise!

MARIA: Am I going to be okay working here? I do need a job and, well... if you can't afford me...

SOPHIE: We can afford you. There's money. Mr tight arse doesn't like spending it.

LORINNA: He got a verbal warning last year. He overspent. He told the council he'd make it up.

SOPHIE: So we suffer. And our dear old customers, they get to suffer too.

MARIA: Does the council really want him to pay it back?

LORINNA: The council doesn't care. We provide a service to the elderly. They'd just ask him to try to keep to some kind of budget.

SOPHIE: Everybody suffers because of his wounded pride.

MARIA: You're saying he could spend the money on the truck and improve the menu but won't, because he has some kind of point to prove?

SOPHIE: That about sums it up.

*(Shaun enters)*

SHAUN: Annette said I should help in here while we wait for the mechanic to come.

SOPHIE: Wash your hands.

SHAUN: Sure. *(He goes to the basin to wash his hands)*

SOPHIE: *(Pointing)* Grab those cans of fruit and open them for me. Maria, could you set out the dessert tubs please.

MARIA: Sure. *(She moves to do that)*

LORINNA: These veggies are ready.

SOPHIE: Good. You drain them. I'll take the fish out and when they've cooled a bit we'll tray them off.

*(Annette enters)*

ANNETTE: The mechanic will be at the truck in about thirty minutes.

SHAUN: Thanks.

ANNETTE: You'll be all right in here till then?

SHAUN: Yep.

ANNETTE: Where's, Roger?

SOPHIE: He's in his office, sulking.

ANNETTE: Right.

*(Annette exits)*

*(The three cooks are dishing up meals into the trays whilst Shaun is scooping peaches from a can into the dessert tubs)*

LORINNA: So, Maria, what's your hobby? What do you like doing in your spare time?

MARIA: I'm a sketch artist. I go to the markets on the weekend and sketch people for a bit of extra cash.

LORINNA: Really? You any good?

MARIA: I guess. People tell me I'm good. What about you?

LORINNA: I make costume jewellery. I go to the markets too.

MARIA: That's awesome. Which one?

LORINNA: The one on Tuart Street.

MARIA: I've never been to that one.

LORINNA: It's pretty good.

MARIA: Can you show me some of your jewellery?

LORINNA: Sure, if you show me some of your sketches.

MARIA: Love to. What about you Sophie? What's your hobby?

SOPHIE: Keeping my family happy. Keeping my home clean. I'd like to go out, but we don't seem to do that very much anymore.

MARIA: What about you Shaun?

SHAUN: Err, I go dancing.

MARIA: That's where I've seen you. You go to the same nightclubs as me. *(Pause)* You're good. I've seen you.

SHAUN: Thanks.

SOPHIE: I'm going to ask, Roger in to help.

*(Sophie exits)*

SHAUN: You know, you could both make a bit of extra money doing sketches and selling jewellery to the oldies.

LORINNA: What?

MARIA: How?

SHAUN: Mostly they're pretty bored. They like visitors. For some of them I'm the only visitor they get. If I asked them, I could find out if they'd be interested in seeing your sketches and your jewellery.

LORINNA: You reckon?

MARIA: I thought old people were poor and they didn't have any money.

SHAUN: Just because they get meals on wheels doesn't mean they're broke. Some are, but most of them aren't. They have money and they like to have a bit of fun.

LORINNA: Gee, I never thought of them like that.

MARIA: How do we...?

SHAUN: Shush. Later.

*(Sophie and Roger enter the kitchen)*

SOPHIE: Roger, can you put the lids on those dessert trays?

ROGER: Sure.

*(Annette enters)*

ANNETTE: Shaun, the mechanic is down at the truck.

SHAUN: That's quick. I better get going. See ya.

SOPHIE: Thanks for your help, Shaun.

SHAUN: Sure, no problems.

*(Shaun exits)*

ROGER: Two eggs, a sausage and a piece of toast walk into a café and the owner yells at them. 'Hey, we don't serve breakfast here'!

ALL: Groan.

ROGER: I've had enough of this. I can't stand all this negativity.

*(Roger exits)*

SOPHIE: Our fearless leader is not very happy.

ANNETTE: Well. I've had it with him. Always taking short cuts. Boring food and a lack of staff is one thing. Now this shit on his liver is going to get us all down.

LORINNA: We don't hear you talk like that very often.

SOPHIE: Annette's right.

MARIA: Isn't there anyone you can talk to? Someone in council?

ANNETTE: Roger's immediate boss doesn't care enough about us and besides the two of them are fishing buddies, so talking to him won't do us any good.

SOPHIE: Claudette!

ANNETTE: Yes. Claudette.

MARIA: Who's Claudette?

ANNETTE: Claudette's the health and safety manager for the council. Roger doesn't report to her but she carries a lot of weight.

SOPHIE: She comes here to do health checks on the food and safety inspections. She reckons Roger's slack. They argue all the time.

LORINNA: They listen to her when she complains about this place...

MARIA: Have you complained to her?

SOPHIE: Oh, she knows, Roger. *(Pause)* I'll have a little talk with her next time she's here.

*(Roger enters without his hat)*

ROGER: Sophie! *(Pause)* We need to talk.

SOPHIE: Oh!

Roger If we don't make a decision on the staff Christmas party soon, I'll have difficulties booking a place in time.

SOPHIE: Oh.

ROGER: Well, do we do go to the pub like always or what?

LORINNA: Let's have 'what' for a change.

ROGER: Huh?

SOPHIE Pubs are boring. Can't we see if we can get a fancier place this time?

LORINNA: Yeah. Like a yacht or a restaurant with a view.

ROGER: We could fly to Rio.

SOPHIE: I've always wanted a white Christmas. Let's fly to Scandinavia.

ROGER: Right! I'll book the pub. *(He turns to exit)*

SOPHIE: Why?

ROGER: I can afford the pub.

*(Roger exits)*

ROGER: *(Off stage right)* What do you want?

CLAUDETTE: *(Off stage left)* I'm here to check on you!

ROGER: *(Off stage right)* Well you can bugger off. We're too busy to entertain you!

*(Roger enters followed by Claudette)*

CLAUDETTE: I don't need entertaining and if I did, it wouldn't be by you!

ROGER: Now's not a good time. The truck's broken down and we're training a new cook...

CLAUDETTE: It's never a good time for you! Why aren't you wearing a hat? You're supposed to wear hair covering in a kitchen. You're supposed to set an example.

ROGER: *(He goes to the wall and pulls a bouffant hair cover from a dispenser)* You're supposed to tell me in advance when you're coming here!

CLAUDETTE: Not any more.

ROGER: What! Why?

CLAUDETTE: My department now includes this site.

ROGER: No. *(Pause)* I report to Steven.

CLAUDETTE: Not any more you don't. You now report to me, you pirate!

ROGER: What about Steven.

CLAUDETTE: Steven doesn't work for the council any more. He's been asked to leave! As of this morning he's out and I'm in. I'm – your – boss!

ROGER: Why?

CLAUDETTE: Cutbacks. That's the official reason. You'd better watch yourself, Roger. I'll be watching you like a hawk.

ROGER: I see. *(Pause)* So I'm a pirate now am I?

CLAUDETTE: You're a rogue, Roger.

ROGER: So, I'll be flying the Jolly Roger for you. Argh.

CLAUDETTE: What?

ROGER: *(Pirate accent)* The pirate's flag. *(He looks around the room)* Where's me cutlass? Where's me shipmates?

CLAUDETTE: You're nuts!

ROGER: *(Pirate accent)* Argh! The gods gave us men strength, courage, fortitude to put up with women like you!

*(Roger exits)*

MARIA: What did the gods give us women?

LORINNA: Patience.

CLAUDETTE: He's gone quite mad. *(Pause)* Sophie, Annette, how do you cope with him?

ANNETTE: I think you may have upset him.

CLAUDETTE: I'm not concerned about his feelings. I want to know what's happening here.

SOPHIE: I guess we're all a bit surprised about your news.

CLAUDETTE: Why? Steven was incompetent. He let Roger get away with far too much. All that is going to change. If you've any complaints about Jolly Roger, I want to hear them.

SOPHIE: *(To Claudette)* This is Maria. She's our new cook.

CLAUDETTE: *(She looks to Maria)* Maria, welcome. Have you worked in a commercial kitchen before?

MARIA: I have, but this is my first time in Meals on Wheels kitchen.

CLAUDETTE: It's no different from any other kitchen. Standards have to be met, procedures followed, performance levels achieved.

MARIA: I'll do my best.

CLAUDETTE: Sophie will show you how. *(To Sophie and Annette)* I'm going to arrange a staff meeting. If you have any issues you want to address with me, you should do it then.

SOPHIE: Sure.

CLAUDETTE: Good. I'll leave you to it... *(She indicates the food preparation)*  
*(Claudette exits)*

LORINNA: Well! How about that!

SOPHIE: That changes things.

MARIA: So, you're going to tell Claudette about what's going on around here? She seems the type to get things done.

ANNETTE: Not bloody likely. She'll shut us down.

MARIA: What! Why? When? What about all the old people who depend on this place for a decent meal each day?

LORINNA: She'll use Roger as an excuse to close us down and give our jobs to a contractor.

MARIA: Contractor? Why?

ANNETTE: It's less responsibility for the council. We're not normal business for them. They sack us, saves them wages and running costs. The contractor makes a profit.

LORINNA: Our jobs will be offered back to us but at a lower hourly rate. They call it out-sourcing.

SOPHIE: But it gets worse than that. The meals are even worse than ours and they charge the oldies more for them.

ANNETTE: I hear the service is really bad too. Their contract drivers deliver and run. Our volunteers stay for a chat.

MARIA: But you said Claudette was the person to talk to get some positive changes around here.

ANNETTE: That was before she became our boss. Everything's changed now. Claudette's ambitious.

MARIA: This is terrible. *(She accidentally knocks a saucepan of sauce onto the floor)* Oh, sorry! I'm so sorry!

SOPHIE: It's okay. We'll hose it into the drain.

*(Sophie gets the hose off the wall and walks to the spill. She is pointing the hose toward the audience and asks Maria to turn on the tap. Maria tries the tap but it is stuck. It won't turn)*

*(Roger enters)*

MARIA: Roger. Can you help me with this tap please?

ROGER: Of course. *(He goes to the tap and tries to turn it on. All the time, Sophie has the hose pointing in the general direction of the audience)* It's stuck. *(He strains and grunts)*

SOPHIE: Can you manage it?

ROGER: *(In a pirate voice)* Argh... I think so....

SOPHIE: *(Sophie moves forward)* Roger?

ROGER: What!

SOPHIE: Roger!

ROGER: It's coming!

*Lights down – Curtain*

## **Meals Warmed Up Act One – Scene Two**

*It is Monday morning, one week later. In the kitchen are Shaun, Lorinna and Maria.*

MARIA: Thank you Shaun. *(She gives him a hug)*

SHAUN: How did you go?

MARIA: I'm happy... I've had a fantastic weekend. Four clients wanted a sketch.

SHAUN: *(Looking at Lorinna)* How about you?

LORINNA: I sold 3 bracelets and 5 rings. I've done better than that at the markets. But, when I showed them the lingerie, I got lots of orders. I'll be busy for weeks.

MARIA: Next weekend I'm doing a family sketch. I thought they might think my fee was a bit high, but they said "no problem". One family loves my sketches so much they're going to have them framed.

SHAUN: I'm pleased for you both.

MARIA: How well did you go, Shaun?

SHAUN: Pretty good.

LORINNA: Spill the beans. How much money did you make?

SHAUN: \$720.

LORINNA: Wow! I don't understand. How'd you make so much money? You say you just dance for them?

SHAUN: That's right.

LORINNA: You must be a pretty good dancer.

MARIA: He is. I've seen him dance at clubs. His friends are fantastic too.

SHAUN: *(He give Maria a worried look)* Err... Thanks.

LORINNA: What so good about his dancing?

MARIA: He's...

SHAUN: I'm professionally trained and I also give lessons. *(Pause)* I'm an instructor.

LORINNA: Oh, you must teach my husband.

MARIA: *(Laughing)* I don't think you'll want him to learn..

SHAUN: I'm fully booked. I can't take on any more work. Sorry.

LORINNA: Fair enough. *(Pause)* I'll get the cheese, won't be long.

*(Lorinna exits)*

MARIA: *(Teasing)* Don't you want people to know that you're an exotic dancer?

**This is not the end of "Meals Warmed Up"  
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***Prop List & Letters included with this play.***