

Death in the Salsa Class

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a short play

by

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Characters

ROBBIE Female Manager/Teacher of the Salsa School

SASHA

JENNIFER

SUE

MARY

NATALIE

Setting

The studio of a rundown Salsa School

Time

Night

Death in the Salsa Class

- ROBBIE: (LEADING CLASS) So we go
Step back with your right foot and then -
Let's get into it.
One two three four
One two three four
One two three four
- SASHA: Isn't it one, two, three ?
- ROBBIE: No Sasha – it's one, two, three,
(DANCING) Two two three.
- JENNIFER: How come it's three ?
- ROBBIE: Four two three
Five two three
So you step forward and then cross your leg over – your left leg - and
then step back with your right leg and back.
Okay
So step forward with your right leg, cross over with your left, step back
- with your right and then your left
- SUE: Is that seriously a salsa move ?
- ROBBIE: Yes, thank you Sue. You can do anything in salsa. You can move
anyway you like in salsa. So it's one two three
- SUE: And I thought it was the same as box steps
- ROBBIE: -and then you can put some change steps in between. You can do some
rock'n'roll moves too.
- SUE: Isn't that rock'n'roll ?
- ROBBIE: Ready.
One two three
One two three
One two three
Now go faster
One two three
One two three
One two three
- MARY: Until you fall over ?
- ROBBIE: And then relax.
And again - One two three, One two three
And maybe we can do a Salsa turn.

SUE: That's a good idea. Can I get a drink ?

ROBBIE: Yeah sure.

SUE GOES OVER TO HER BAG. SHE NOTICES THE COVERED CAGE.

ROBBIE: And keep going
Back forward
One two three
One two three
One two three
And turn

SUE LOOKS IN THE CAGE.

SUE: Ah guys.

ROBBIE: What ?

SUE: Robbie, can I see you for a second ?

ROBBIE GOES OVER.

ROBBIE: Sure. What is it ? (SHE LOOKS) Oh my god.

SUE: Has someone –

ROBBIE: It's a – what is it ?

NATALIE: It's mine.

ROBBIE: Why would you bring that into my class ?

NATALIE: I didn't want to disrupt the class.

SUE: So you brought a -?

ROBBIE: Into the class ?

SUE: You do know it's ...

NATALIE: I found it like that this morning.

MARY: Is it yours ?

NATALIE: Yes.

ROBBIE: Oh my god !

NATALIE: I found it like that this morning and I didn't know what to do with it ?

ROBBIE: So you brought it to my class ?

NATALIE: Well I didn't want to leave it at Uni.

SASHA: Why did you take it to Uni ?

NATALIE: Because I didn't want to leave it at home.

JENNIFER: Why ?

NATALIE: Because I was hoping –

SUE: It would be re-surrected ?

SASHA: Have you been carrying that around all day ?

NATALIE: No, no – I only just bought it here because I thought I could -

ROBBIE: When did it die ?

NATALIE: Monday morning, yesterday morning.

ROBBIE: So that thing's dead for two days and you brought it to class tonight.

SUE: How did it die ?

NATALIE: I don't know.

ROBBIE: You do know it's dead ?

SUE: A dead budgie.

ROBBIE: In my salsa class.

MARY: What do you want us to do about it ?

NATALIE: I don't know. I don't know.

SASHA: I'm so sorry Natalie.

NATALIE: I didn't want to disrupt the class. I'm sorry.

SASHA: What did it die from ?

NATALIE: (BEAT) It just got too cold.

SASHA: Do Budgie's catch colds ?

NATALIE: No, *too* cold not *a* cold.

SUE: Really ?

NATALIE: Yeah.

SASHA: It could be hibernating.

SUE: Do birds hibernate ?

ROBBIE: I don't think so.

JENNIFER: No, they don't.

MARY: I think that's snakes.

JENNIFER: I think it's dead.

SASHA: Yes.

NATALIE: Let's go back to class and we'll –

ROBBIE: We're not going back to class while there's a dead bird sitting in the room.

MARY: She's upset.

ROBBIE: And I'm a little upset about having a dead bird in my classroom.

NATALIE: That's why I put it in the corner. It wasn't intentional.

ROBBIE: Well could you just take it outside.

SUE: Why don't you just stick it in the bin ?

NATALIE: No I'm not going to stick it in the bin.

MARY: We have to give it a proper funeral. Let Natalie dig a grave.

ROBBIE: (OVERLAPPING) No I'm sorry.

SUE: (OVERLAPPING) Funeral ?

SASHA: (OVERLAPPING) I can help with that.

NATALIE: (OVERLAPPING) That's what I was thinking.

MARY: (OVERLAPPING) Let her say goodbye.

JENNIFER: (OVER THE TOP) Mary, Mary.

MARY: What ?

JENNIFER: Where would you dig this grave ?

MARY: I'm not sure. In the park.

JENNIFER: No, no park.

MARY: Why not ?

JENNIFER: By-laws won't allow it. You can't go burying dead animals in the park.

SASHA: Is a budgie an animal ?

JENNIFER: Unless you want to be fined. You can't just bury things in a public place.

ROBBIE: You need a permit.

NATALIE: What if they don't find out ?

SASHA: We could do a midnight run.

MARY: Yeah.

ROBBIE: I don't care what you do as long as you get it out of my class.

SUE: But seriously you should just flush it.

NATALIE: No.

SASHA: It'll clog up the works.

NATALIE: No.

SUE: You flush turds bigger than that.

MARY: I haven't.

SASHA LAUGHS, EMBARRASSED.

JENNIFER: Oh dear.

ROBBIE: Well, yes.

SUE: Okay, what are our options. You flush. You bury.

MARY: (TO SUE) Just stop it.

JENNIFER: Everybody calm down. Now let's just work this out – rationally and logically. Now first, Natalie – is this your bird ?

NATALIE: Yes.

- JENNIFER: How long have you had it ?
- SUE: Who cares ?
- JENNIFER: Sue. Please.
- NATALIE: I found it at Uni last year and it didn't have a tail feather so it couldn't fly and I thought "Oh know, it's going to die if I leave it here" -
- JENNIFER: Sorry, where did you find it ?
- NATALIE: Just a back alley, like between buildings, where people don't go there – it's like an airduct. So I saw it there and I'm like, you know, well I don't have a pet, so I'll take it otherwise she'll die – and this is last year. So yesterday morning –
- JENNIFER: Yesterday ?
- NATALIE: Yesterday - I walked past - it was in the room – so I walked past and I was like "Hey Eli" -
- SASHA: Who's Eli ?
- MARY: The bird.
- SASHA: The budgie's called Eli ?
- NATALIE: and she usually chirps but she didn't. And I was like "Hey Eli". So I went nearer and there was this - I wasn't wearing my contact lenses – and there was this little yellow peep not moving. I went nearer and I saw she was just lying there and I was like 'I don't want to deal with it. I have to get to Uni. I'll just put it aside for the time being.' So I went to Uni and I'm like "I'm fine I'm fine I'm fine" and I didn't want to mention it and then one of my friends Keiran came up and I'm like "Oh by the way Eli died" and he's like "Oh my poor dear." And I'm "No I'm fine" and he comes over and gives me a hug and I start crying I'm like "..." – but then that got better and then at the end of the day I got home and I texted my friend :
- SASHA: Is this Keiran ?
- MARY: I think it's another friend.
- SASHA: Pity. He sounded nice.
- NATALIE: "Are you still coming 'round tonight
- SUE: Booty call.

NATALIE: Because if you are I need some help because my budgie's dead and I need you to help me dispose it because I don't know what to do with it" and he's like "Yeah, yeah I'll come 'round." So he came around, cause he had some company dinner, so he came around half past ten –

SUE: Definite booty call.

NATALIE: And he was like "What do you want to do with it?" And I was like "Can you help me?" "What do you want to do with it?" "I don't know." And he's like "Well we can't decide what to do with it unless you tell me what you *want* to do with it." And I said "Well, we can bury her."

MARY: That's what I said.

NATALIE: And he said: "So you're not going to just chuck it right?" And I said: "No I'm not going to chuck her." And he said: "Okay we can bury her." But it was late, it was dark, it was wet and I didn't have a shovel – so that was out of the question. So anyway, then we went to bed.

SASHA: Together?

SUE: Boot-ay Call.

NATALIE: And then I got up in the morning –

SASHA: I think she just skipped the good bits –

NATALIE: And went to Uni - but then I thought well I can't leave her alone here –

SASHA: Who?

MARY: Eli.

NATALIE: Because she's like dead and she'll be alone – even though of course I left her alone tonnes of times when she was alive, but that's different, now she's dead - so I just took her to Uni with me and when people asked "What's in the box?" I just went "I don't know" and then my tutor came along and said "What's that?" and I said "Dead Budgie" and he said "Oh" and that was funny and then Uni finished and it was time to come to Salsa so I brought her here.

SUE: Because every Salsa Class needs a dead budgie.

JENNIFER: There are probably lots of health issues here.

MARY: That's why we should bury her – like Natalie wanted to.

JENNIFER: Mary, no. No park. No burying.

MARY: Then what do we do ? (TO SUE) And don't say flush.

BEAT.

SASHA: We could push her out to sea.

ROBBIE: Sea ?

SASHA: Like Morse Gods.

JENNIFER: Morse Gods ?

ROBBIE: I think she means "Norse Gods."

SASHA: Push her out to sea. In a burning boat.

MARY: A very small burning boat.

NATALIE: I don't want to burn Eli.

SUE: Scratch that then.

NATALIE: But I guess if we pushed her out to sea, we wouldn't have to bury her.

SASHA: That's what I was thinking.

SUE: Tick the boat, scratch the burning.

ROBBIE: (TO JENNIFER) How are the health issues on that ?

NATALIE: But how would we do it ?

THEY ALL LOOK AT SASHA. BEAT.

SASHA: I don't know. I just thought of it now.

MARY: We could take her down to St Kilda.

NATALIE: Oh yeah, but I don't know the logistics of it. Wouldn't she just float back down ?

JENNIFER: Where ?

NATALIE: We'd have to go far out to sea to do it otherwise the waves would bring her back to the shore and someone would come along and say: "Oh what is this ?" and go "Oh dead budgie." (SHE LAUGHS) So that would be funny. But morbidly funny.

SASHA: We could take her down to the Yarra. Push her down stream.

JENNIFER: No. No River.

NATALIE: That sounds nice.

JENNIFER: Public place.

ROBBIE: At least it would get it out of here.

MARY: Has anybody got a shoebox ?

SUE: Why do you need a shoebox ?

MARY: Make a little coffin.

NATALIE: A little floating coffin.

ROBBIE: There might be one in the cupboard.

ROBBIE GOES TO LOOK.

MARY: Has anybody got tissues ?

SASHA: I do. (SHE GETS OUT THE TISSUES.)

ROBBIE: Got one.

ROBBIE BRINGS BACK THE SHOEBOX.

MARY: Thank you.

MARY TAKES THE SHOEBOX. SHE BEGINS TO LINE IT WITH TISSUES.

NATALIE: What are you doing ?

MARY: Making a little tissue pillow for it to lie on.

SASHA: That's a good idea.

MARY: Okay, now someone get Eli ?

SASHA: Who ?

MARY: The Budgie.

SASHA: I'm not touching it.

MARY LOOKS AT SUE.

SUE: Don't look at me.

ROBBIE: Or me.

MARY: Natalie.

NATALIE: I can't.

MARY: It's your budgie.

NATALIE: Why do you think I've been carrying it around in a cage for two days ?
Can't you do it ?

BEAT.

JENNIFER: I'll do it.

JENNIFER GOES TO THE CAGE. SHE OPENS IT WITHOUT ANY FUSS, TAKES OUT THE BUDGIE, CARRIES IT OVER AND PUTS IT IN THE SHOEBOX.

NATALIE: She should have some flowers.

MARY GRABS SOME FROM A NEARBY CASE.

ROBBIE: Hey, I just brought those ?

MARY: Sorry.

THEY BREAK UP THE FLOWERS AND PLACE THEM IN THE BOX.

SASHA: Does anyone have a cross ?

SUE: I don't think the Budgie's Catholic.

THEY FINISH.

NATALIE: That looks lovely.

MARY: She looks very peaceful.

SASHA: Do Budgie's go to heaven ?

SUE: It's a dead bird in a shoebox. Get over it.

NATALIE: What do we do now ?

MARY: We have to take it down to the river.

SASHA: Is there a river around here ?

SUE: We're in Richmond.

JENNIFER: We could drive. I've got my car.

NATALIE: What about the rest of the class ?

ROBBIE: I'm not sure if anyone feels like dancing now.

SUE: No we've boxed the budgie.

MARY: So what are we waiting for ? Let's go.

SASHA: Wait !

ROBBIE: What is it now Sasha ?

SASHA: Shouldn't someone take a photo.

ROBBIE: What for ?

SASHA: Record the moment.

NATALIE: We can do it on my phone.

SUE: I'll do it.

THEY ALL POSE FOR A PHOTO HOLDING THE SHOEBOX.

SUE: Smile.

THEY ALL SMILE. SUE CLICKS THE CAMERA.

MARY: Let's go.

THEY ALL START TO HEAD OUT, NATALIE CARRYING THE BOX.

ROBBIE: You coming Sue ?

SUE: Why not ?

LIGHTS CHANGE. SPOTLIGHTS UP ON NATALIE, HOLDING THE BOX, AND THE REST OF THE CLASS.

THEY SPEAK DIRECTLY TO THE AUDIENCE.

NATALIE: So we drove down to the river and gently pushed Eli out to the middle.

MARY: I said a little prayer.

SUE: Sasha wouldn't shut up about it.

NATALIE: And watched her float away.

MARY: Then Sasha asked:

SASHA: Is this litter ?

ROBBIE: And Jennifer answered:

JENNIFER: It probably is.

NATALIE: But it was a beautiful night -

SASHA: The sky was really clear.

ROBBIE: And it was a full moon.

MARY: So you could see the reflection of the buildings -

NATALIE: On the water.

SUE: And at one point –

JENNIFER: The box went in between the reflection of two of the tallest buildings –

SASHA: And it was a really nice,

ROBBIE: Symmetrical,

MARY: poetic

SUE: Moment.

NATALIE: And so that's what we did.

MARY: I hope she's still floating along well.

SASHA: And not caught in one of those litter traps.

NATALIE: But it was a nice ceremony.

LIGHTS FADE.