

THE SALSA SLUR

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a short play

by

Alex Broun and the Short+Sweet Script Development Group (Bobbi-lea Dionysius, Ingrid Gang, Justyna Kiczor, Kate Prestt, Daphne Quah, Janeen Sonsie, Lara Woolf)

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Email: abroun@bigpond.net.au

www.alexbroun.com

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Characters

ROBBIE Female Manager/Teacher of the Salsa School

JAMES Her son

JENNIFER

SUE

PAULA

DAPHNE

KATE

Setting

The studio of a rundown Salsa School

Time

Night

The Salsa Slur

Dance Studio, Evening

ROBBIE enters with **JAMES**.

ROBBIE: Cold, cold, cold. Turn on the heater darling please.

JAMES DOES SO.

ROBBIE: Are you going to be okay ?

JAMES: Sure.

ROBBIE: I know you hate doing the classes but ...

JAMES: It's okay.

ROBBIE: Sure.

JAMES: Yes Mum.

BEAT.

ROBBIE: Okay.

ROBBIE TURNS TO SEE KATE.

ROBBIE: Oh. I'm sorry. I didn't –

KATE: That's okay. I'm used to it.

ROBBIE: You were standing here in the dark.

KATE: Hardly worth turning on a light. It's just me.

ROBBIE: You are ?

KATE: Kate. Don't worry if you forget though. Everybody does.

ROBBIE: I won't forget. Kate. It's emblazoned on my memory.

KATE: Why ? I think my boyfriend would forget my name as well. If it wasn't on the phone bill. He's at home, watching telly. He's always watching telly. We never speak, except during the ad breaks. He says he doesn't like to miss stuff. 9 minutes every hour. It used to be seven but there's more ads now. Don't want to watch the ABC. We'd never talk.

ROBBIE: Right ...

KATE: Told you you'd forget.

PAULA ENTERS FOLLOWED BY DAPHNE.

PAULA: (TO DAPHNE) Come on. You'll be alright. You can't let –

ROBBIE: Here they are. Paula and ...

PAULA: Daphne.

ROBBIE: Of course. The lovely Daphne. Sorry.

PAULA: Where's ...

ROBBIE: Jacqueline won't be with us this evening. Or any other evening for that matter.

PAULA: That's good.

SUE ENTERS.

ROBBIE: Is it ?

PAULA: Nothing against her. It's just (BEAT) you're a better teacher.

SUE: Anyone would be.

ROBBIE: Oh hello –

SUE: Sue.

ROBBIE: Of course.

SUE: Jacqueline was quelle nightmare.

ROBBIE: Quelle ?

SUE: French. Do that Thursdays. But it's Tuesday – so it must be salsa. (TO **JAMES**) Who's the stud ?

ROBBIE: This is my son, James. I hope you don't mind if he joins us.

SUE: Not at all. It's good to have at least one man. Such as he is.

ROBBIE: We'll see about getting some more.

SUE: That would be good. Don't come to Salsa to meet lots of lonely women. No offence.

PAULA: None taken.

SUE: We starting soon. It's five past.

ROBBIE: Is this everybody ?

SUE: It's just I pay for the full hour and I only get 50 minutes – maximum.

ROBBIE: We'll try to be more punctual from now on.

SUE: That would be good.

ROBBIE: Let's start warming up then.

PAULA: Listen Robbie, there's something I need to discuss with you.

ROBBIE: Of course. Can it wait till after class ?

PAULA: No. I'm afraid I need to discuss it now.

ROBBIE: Of course but other students are keen to start.

PAULA: This is very important.

ROBBIE: Well, very quickly.

PAULA: It's just that there was a woman who use to come to this class and if she comes tonight I'm afraid Daphne and I won't be able to stay.

DAPHNE: I didn't –

PAULA: No Daphne. This is important. She needs to know.

ROBBIE: I'm sorry. A woman ...

PAULA: Sue knows her. She didn't come last week.

ROBBIE: Then perhaps she won't come tonight.

PAULA: But she ... said something and Daphne stopped coming.

KATE: I remember.

ROBBIE: Oh, you do ...

KATE: Kate. Told you you'd forget.

ROBBIE: Not at all. Kate. So, what was said ?

PAULA: It was a slur.

SUE: A slur, are you sure ?

KATE: It was about Daphne being ...

ROBBIE: Being what ?

KATE: I don't want to do it too.

ROBBIE: Do what ?

KATE: The slur.

PAULA: She made a derogatory remark about Daphne being Asian.

ROBBIE: Did she ? What exactly was said ?

PAULA: Jacqueline heard it.

ROBBIE: Did she ? Did anybody else hear it ?

KATE: I did.

DAPHNE NODS.

SUE: Not me.

ROBBIE: (TO **PAULA**) And you ?

PAULA: No, but I was told what was said.

SUE: We starting soon ? Seven minutes.

ROBBIE: Of course, Look Paula, I don't really think anything can be done until we establish exactly what was said.

PAULA: Daphne knows what was said.

ROBBIE: And Daphne's here whereas the other woman –

PAULA: Jennifer.

JENNIFER ENTERS

JENNIFER: Sorry I'm late.

KATE: Is also here.

KATE GETS A CHAIR TO SIT AND WATCH.

DAPHNE: I'm just going to go.

PAULA: No, you're staying. This is modern Australia. We're not going to be pushed around by people like her.

JENNIFER: Have I missed anything ?

SUE: Not yet.

ROBBIE: Jennifer. I'm Robbie. I'll be taking the class for Jacqueline. Lets get started shall we.

PAULA: I'm sorry we can't start until this is sorted out.

ROBBIE: (TO **PAULA**) Can't we –

PAULA: No we can't. You can't start until you ask this woman to leave.

JENNIFER: Me ?

PAULA: You know what you said.

SUE: Eight minutes.

ROBBIE: Just a second.

PAULA: You made a comment about Daphne regarding her ethnicity.

JENNIFER: When ?

PAULA: Last time you came to class.

JENNIFER: What exactly did I say ?

PAULA: You know exactly what you said.

ROBBIE: Hold on but you don't know what she said.

PAULA: Daphne heard. (POINTING TO **KATE**) She ...

KATE: Kate.

PAULA: Heard.

ROBBIE: But you didn't.

PAULA: How does that matter ?

SUE: Nine minutes.

ROBBIE: (TO **SUE**) Just ...

PAULA: And it's not just that, is it Jennifer ? Would you like to tell the rest of the class what else you've done to Daphne ? The other pain you've inflicted.

JENNIFER: I hardly see that is relevant.

PAULA: No there's a link. A definite link. One night you're racially slurring Daphne, the next day you're firing her.

KATE: It's a bit like Law and Order isn't it ?

JENNIFER: And I repeat – it's not relevant to this class.

PAULA: So you didn't sack Daphne because you were worried she'd tell your partners the type of person you were ?

JENNIFER: No.

ROBBIE: Can we just talk about this afterwards ?

SUE: Here, here.

PAULA: Stop lying.

JENNIFER: How dare you ?

KATE: Maybe Boston Legal.

ROBBIE: If everybody would just calm down –

JENNIFER: No. Allegations have been made now. I need to clear my name.

DAPHNE: Paula, I'm just going to go.

PAULA: Stay there.

SUE: Ten.

ROBBIE: Please ...

JENNIFER: Paula has made allegations about my ethical work practices – in front of witnesses. She needs to retract those.

PAULA: Threatening me now – just like you threatened Daphne.

JENNIFER: I didn't threaten her.

DAPHNE: I don't want –

PAULA: Daphne. It has to come out.

SUE: I want a refund.

ROBBIE: What ?

SUE: This is not what I paid for. I come to this class to de-stress and what do I get – stress, stress, stress. We always start late, the last teacher was hopeless, for all I know you'll be just as bad – I want my money back.

ROBBIE: If you just give me a chance –

PAULA: Is that all you care about ? Getting your money back. A woman has been slandered.

JENNIFER: Yes I have.

SUE: Look I paid my money. I want my class. I don't care who said what to who.

KATE: CSI ?

PAULA: So racists just get away with it.

JENNIFER: I'm not a racist.

DAPHNE: I don't want this.

ROBBIE: You don't even know what was said.

PAULA: It doesn't matter !

ROBBIE: If we can –

JAMES: (SUDDENLY) Stop it. Stop it. Would everybody stop shouting ?

JAMES RUNS OUT OF THE ROOM.

SUE: I'm with you buddy.

ROBBIE: I'm sorry.

ROBBIE FOLLOWS HIM.

ROBBIE: James. James ...

JENNIFER: (TO PAULA) I trust you're pleased.

PAULA: How did I ...?

JENNIFER: You've ruined this class.

PAULA: No I haven't – you have. You abused Daphne and then sacked her.

JENNIFER: You keep making these allegations. Daphne had been with us for six months. She had her review. She didn't come up[to scratch. We let her go.

PAULA: Because you were scared of being exposed for the racist you are.

KATE: (REALISING) Dancing with the stars !

SUE: Exactly.

PAULA: I'll do the class and Daphne will do the class – if Jennifer leaves.

DAPHNE: Paula, I don't even want to do the class.

JENNIFER: I wasn't even going to come back this week.

PAULA: Then why did you ?

JENNIFER: Because my friend and my daughter suggested this class and I'm not going to face up them and tell them I failed.

PAULA: That's right isn't it ? That's what it's all about to you. Successful lawyer, successful business woman, successful racist.

JENNIFER: Five minutes ago I would've been happy to go – but now I'm staying, just to annoy you.

DAPHNE: Paula, please.

PAULA: Alright then, we'll go.

SUE: Good.

PAULA: (TO **SUE**) And you can get your precious money's worth.

SUE: Well I did pay.

JENNIFER: So did I.

PAULA: So did we. Of course some off us care a little bit more about important things.

SUE: Get over it. It's a salsa class. In Richmond.

PAULA: Well, enjoy Dancing with Racists then.

JENNIFER: Right that's it. The next time you say that – I'm charging you with slander.

PAULA: Feel free.

ROBBIE LEADS JAMES BACK IN.

ROBBIE: Sorry about that. We've had some family ... issues and James hasn't been coping very well. So I didn't want to leave him at home alone. All sorted out ?

KATE: Sort of.

PAULA: Daphne and I will just get out of your way. Have a good class Jennifer.

JENNIFER: I will now.

PAULA: Kate, Robbie, James.

SUE: Just go already.

PAULA: I'll make sure to recommend this class to everyone I know.

PAULA ESCORTS DAPHNE OUT. BEAT.

ROBBIE: Well, shall we make a start. I'll put on some music.

ROBBIE PUTS ON A SALSA TUNE.

ROBBIE: Just some basic moves to get warmed up.
And 4 – 5 – 6, 4 – 5 – 6 ...

ROBBIE LEADS THE CLASS. SUE, JENNIFER, KATE AND JAMES SLOWLY JOIN IN.

FADE.