

Waiting for Jacqueline

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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)

Email: abroun@bigpond.net.au

www.alexbroun.com

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CHARACTERS

BERNIE – Art Teacher, 40s

RICARDO – Enthusiastic dancer, 20s

PAULA – Event organiser, late 20s

SASHA – Receptionist, early 20s

NATALIE – Personal Assistant, Asian, 20s

MARY – Student, country girl, 20s

JENNIFER- lawyer, 40s

SUE – would-be presenter, late 20s

SETTING

A dance studio.

TIME

Night

Waiting for Jacqueline

Dance studio. Night.

Lights up. RICARDO is dancing alone in front of a mirror. He stops and goes to a bag nearby. He takes out a brush and brushes his hair. He goes back to the mirror and dances again. Still not right. He stops and goes back to the bag. He takes out a bandana and ties it on his head. He goes back to the mirror. Ta da ! He dances again.

MARY enters.

MARY: Hi.

RICARDO: *Buonas Noches.*

MARY: Oh that's nice, that's Spanish ... and it's a

RICARDO: *Clase de salsa.*

MARY COMES OVER TO RICARDO. THEY STAND WAITING.

MARY: So, it's just us ?

RICARDO: No the teacher's late. She's always late.

MARY: Oh, I'm Mary.

RICARDO: *Ricardo.*

MARY: Ricardo, that's Spanish too and Salsa comes from -

RICARDO: Cuba. Actually it's Bart. But I like to tell people it's Ricardo.

MARY: Why ?

RICARDO: Bart the Salsa shark. Doesn't really have the same ring ?

MARY: Great costume. I didn't know what to wear.

RICARDO: It's okay. You look ... kind of ...

MARY: What ?

JENNIFER ENTERS, TALKING ON THE PHONE. SHE WAVES TO MARY AND RICARDO.

JENNIFER: Get her to fax it to the office and I'll look at in the morning./No I can't come back there now I've got something on./ Something. Just get her to fax it.

JENNIFER HANGS UP. SHE PUTS HER PHONE AWAY.

RICARDO: (TO MARY) That bit about my real name -

HE HOLDS A FINGER OVER HIS MOUTH. MARY NODS. RICARDO DANCES AWAY AND CONTINUES TO GO THROUGH SOME STEPS.

JENNIFER: I see there was no need to hurry.

MARY: Guess not.

JENNIFER: I don't believe we've ...

MARY: Mary. New.

JENNIFER: (EXTENDING HAND) Jennifer. Wishart.

MARY: No, I mean I'm new. Not I'm Mary New.

JENNIFER: I see. Well new or not - you haven't missed much.

MARY: No ?

MARY OPENS HER BAG. SEARCHING FOR SOMETHING.

JENNIFER: Our teacher's punctuality is spasmodic to say the least.

MARY: Busy ?

JENNIFER: Just work.

MARY: Oh. What do you do ?

SUE ENTERS.

SUE: Have we started ?

RICARDO: *Por supuesto.*

SUE: What does that mean ?

RICARDO: Of course not.

SUE: (NODS TO JENNIFER, THEN) Hi, I'm Sue.

MARY: I'm Mary.

SUE: Guess you've heard.

MARY: About what ?

SUE: *Jac-que*-line - our teacher - always late.

MARY: Oh, yes.

SUE: You know, we should take bets.

MARY: Bets ?

SUE: On when she'll turn up. Run a sweep. Five bucks in. I say fifteen minutes. Ricardo ?

RICARDO: *Veinte minutos.*

SUE: How long is that ?

RICARDO: Twenty.

SUE: (TO MARY) What about you ?

MARY: I'm not sure.

SUE: Put you down for eighteen.

SUE LOOKS TO JENNIFER.

JENNIFER: Jennifer.

SUE: Sorry. How long ?

JENNIFER: I don't bet.

JENNIFER SORTS SOME PAPERS IN HER BAG.

SUE: Suit yourself.

BERNIE: (ENTERING) Sorry I'm late.

SUE: You're not.

BERNIE: You mean ... ?

SUE: Again. We're taking a pool on how long she'll be. Five bucks in.

BERNIE: Fifteen minutes.

SUE: Taken.

BERNIE: Twenty.

RICARDO: Taken.

BERNIE: Twenty one. I'm Bernie.

MARY: Mary. This is my first time.

BERNIE: For what ? Don't worry – it only hurts a little bit.

SUE: If she ever arrives.

BERNIE: You live around here ?

MARY: Ballarat.

BERNIE: Long way to come.

MARY: Sorry. I used to live in Ballarat. Now I live upstairs.

BERNIE: I didn't know they had –

MARY: They do.

BERNIE: How are they ?

MARY: Small.

BERNIE: Hope the dance classes don't keep you awake ?

SUE: Not much chance of that.

PAULA: (ENTERING) She's late again ? I deliberately waited.

SUE: We're running a pool on how late she'll be. You in ?

PAULA: Sure.

SUE: How long do you think ?

PAULA: I'm going to go for a no show.

SUE: Big call.

PAULA: Third week. Later and later each week – so this time she won't come at all.

SUE: This is Mary. She's from Ballarat. And she's got the hots for Ricardo.

BERNIE: Join the queue.

PAULA: I'm Paula. And don't mind them.

SUE: Five minutes and counting.

NATALIE: (ENTERING) Sorry. I got held up at work again. Had to ...

SHE SEES JENNIFER AND TRAILS OFF.

PAULA: Don't worry. She isn't here. Of course.

SUE: You can take a bet though.

BERNIE: On when she'll get here.

NATALIE: Seventeen minutes.

PAULA: Nice number.

NATALIE: Lucky.

BERNIE: This is the new victim. Mary from Ballarat.

MARY: Well actually I'm from –

BERNIE: This is Natalie from –

NATALIE: Fitzroy. Hi.

BERNIE: So what are we going to do ? Just sit around and wait.

SUE: Why doesn't Ricardo take the class ?

RICARDO: Oh no. I couldn't.

PAULA: No that's a good idea. Come on Ricardo.

BERNIE: Yeah spunky.

RICARDO: If you insist. (HE GOES TO THE FRONT) Okay, let's get in a line and start warming up.

THE LADIES LINE UP WITH RICARDO IN FRONT.

RICARDO: Welcome to Studio Ricardo.

BERNIE & SUE: Nice arse.

THE LADIES LAUGH.

RICARDO: And 4, 5, 6 –
HE STARTS TO EXECUTE SOME STEPS. THE GIRLS START TO FOLLOW. JENNIFERS PHONE RINGS.

SUE: Can't dance with the phone.

JENNIFER: It's mine. I'll just –

JENNIFER ANSWERS THE PHONE AND TAKES IT OFFSTAGE.

BERNIE: Well turn it off. It's a salsa lesson. Not the stock exchange.

NATALIE: A legal firm actually.

PAULA: They're colleagues.

NATALIE: She's my boss.

BERNIE: You mean you have to work with that stuck up –

NATALIE: She's okay. She's under a lot of pressure.

BERNIE: Then she should turn off her phone and relax.

NATALIE: I'm sure she will.

JENNIFER RE-ENTERS.

RICARDO: Okay, now we should pair up. Any volunteers ?

SUE AND BERNIE PUT UP THEIR HANDS TOGETHER.

SUE AND BERNIE: Me !

BERNIE GRABS RICARDO. PAULA GOES TO PAIR UP WITH
NATALIE BUT NATALIE SMILES AND INDICATES MARY. SUE AND
PAULA PAIR UP.

SUE: I'll be the man.

BERNIE: That's not hard.

RICARDO STARTS TO LEAD SOME STEPS. THE LADIES FOLLOW.

RICARDO: And ...

JENNIFER PUTS HER PHONE BACK IN THE BAG AND TURNS TO SEE
SHE IS WITHOUT A PARTNER.

MARY NOTICES THIS.

MARY: Oh sorry. Jqacqueline, you go with Natalie. It's my first time and I
don't know –

JENNIFER: It's Jennifer. (PICKING UP BAG) No it's okay Mary. I'm actually going to go.

NATALIE: What ?

SUE: It's okay. Ricardo's taking the class.

BERNIE: And doing much better than Jacqueline.

JENNIFER: I'm sorry Ricardo. Nothing against you. It's just that I rushed here from work and the whole thing is very disorganised. The teacher's always late, and the environment.

BERNIE: What's wrong with the environment ?

JENNIFER: The walls are filthy and the floor looks like it's about to cave in – and I can't stand the smell in here tonight.

A CHORUS OF SURPRISE AND DISAPPROVAL.

BERNIE: Then open a window.

JENNIFER: I tried and you get suffocated by all the fumes of Asian cookers wafting in.

SUE: What do you expect ? You're in Richmond.

JENNIFER: (EXITING) No, I'm just going to ... (SHE EXITS)

SUE: What a bitch.

RICARDO: Perhaps it was my after shave.

PAULA: (TO NATALIE) How can you work with her ?

NATALIE: I'm just going to go after her.

BERNIE: Why ? Leave her. Didn't you hear what she just said ?

NATALIE: If I don't she'll think I'm being rude.

BERNIE: She's the one being rude.

PAULA: I'll come with you.

PAULA AND NATALIE EXIT. PAUSE.

MARY: Is this class always so ... eventful ?

BERNIE: Don't know why she bothers. Racist bitch.

SUE: Racist ?

BERNIE: You heard her. Suffocated by all the Asians.

SUE: She was talking about cooking.

BERNIE: "Cookers" ?

SUE: Cook-*ing*.

BERNIE: You know what she meant ?

SUE: Yeah, "the Pad Thai is a bit off tonight."

BERNIE: It was racist. She can't get the dance steps so she puts down Asians, which Natalie happens to be. Isn't that right Mary ?

MARY: I didn't really ...

BERNIE: You all lily white up there in Ballarat ?

MARY: Maybe she has respiratory problems.

SUE: That's right. An allergy.

BERNIE: To people with yellow skin.

MARY: Well I guess it could be seen as a bit harsh.

SUE: Don't side with her.

MARY: The way she said Asian.

SUE: Not too bright up there in the little smoke, are they ?

NATALIE AND PAULA RETURN.

NATALIE: Couldn't find her.

BERNIE: Good riddance.

PAULA: Do you want us to be witnesses ?

SUE: To what ?

PAULA: Natalie being verbally abused.

SUE: She was talking about fried rice.

BERNIE: She knew exactly what she was talking about, anal bitch.

SUE: You're just jealous because she makes more money than you.

NATALIE: I'm sure Jennifer didn't mean it.

PAULA: Natalie, it's okay.

NATALIE: That's what I'm saying.

PAULA: You can tell them.

NATALIE: It's not about that.

BERNIE: Tell us what ?

PAULA: Natalie is up for review next week.

NATALIE: I've only been there three months. My job isn't confirmed.

SUE: And who's doing the review ?

PAULA: Jennifer.

BERNIE: Good luck.

PAULA: And she's going to sack Natalie because she's Asian.

NATALIE: No, not at all.

PAULA: You said there had been issues.

BERNIE: What issues ?

NATALIE: But not about that ... and there've been resolved.

MARY: So you'll keep your job ?

NATALIE: I don't think so. Not after tonight.

RICARDO: But it's not your fault. You weren't cooking the food.

NATALIE: She was upset. She left. In Jennifer's mind – she failed. And now I'm connected with that failure.

SUE: Sayonara.

PAULA: We'll we stop her.

NATALIE: How ?

PAULA: We go above her. To the senior partners. Or the papers. Current Affair. Report her for the racist she is.

SUE: What exactly is your problem ? Was your last girlfriend Asian ?

PAULA: Well actually my ex-partner was from Pakistan and the way she was treated. You might like to think it's all fine in modern Australia but it isn't.

MARY: She probably shouldn't have mentioned Asians.

SUE: Make up your mind.

MARY: Maybe we could set up a meeting between them. A re-conciliation.

SUE: Oh , and get your land back too.

BERNIE: You can go as well.

NATALIE: Look I'm sure it's not connected with my work. You're just making a mountain out of a molehill ?

PAULA: Who is ?

NATALIE: You are. You all are.

SUE: Not me. I'm agreeing with you.

BERNIE: Oh stuff this. I'm going to the pub. You coming Ballarat ? (EXITS)

SUE: Wait for me. (EXITING) Hey, who won the bet ?

PAULA: Shall we get a coffee and talk about it ?

NATALIE: I might just go home.

PAULA: Sure. I'll walk you to the tram. (THEY EXIT.)

MARY: Which ... pub ? (MARY STARTS TO LEAVE) You coming Bart ?

RICARDO: *Mi nombre es Ricardo.*

MARY: Oh sorry. See you next week, I hope.

MARY EXITS. RICARDO DANCES ALONE. LIGHTS FADE.