

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Just Like That

by Stephen House

EXTRACT

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CHARACTERS

Mabelene A woman around 65

Bennett Her husband, around 65

Clive A man around 65

SET

At a bench by the beach

The Kitchen of Mabelene and Bennett's House

In a café by the beach

A vacant downstage area is used for various scenes

ACT 1

Scene 1

MUSIC PLAYS LIGHTLY AND FADES AS:
THE SOUNDS OF THE SEA / GULLS DRIFT IN AND FADE
BENNETT PACES BACK AND FORTH THEN SITS
CLIVE ENTERS AND APPROACHES, DRINKING FROM A CAN OF BEER

CLIVE

Hi.

BENNETT

Oh ... hi.

CLIVE

Are you Ok?

BENNETT

Yeah; yeah I am Ok ... now. Thanks.

CLIVE

Are you sure?

BENNETT

Yep ... it was just a bloody shock, that's all.

CLIVE

I bet. Do you mind? SEAT

BENNETT

No ... please. SEAT

CLIVE SITS DOWN NEXT TO BENNETT

BENNETT

Thank you for your help before.

CLIVE

I didn't do anything at all really. You were very good; you tried everything you could to ---

BENNETT

No, no, I could've done more I think ... much more.

CLIVE

No! Honestly you were ---

BENNETT

Shit, I don't know; there I was pushing away without a clue as ---

CLIVE

You were wonderful.

BENNETT

No.

CLIVE

Yes, really! You did your very best. Lot's of people would've just stood there gaping. I wouldn't have had a clue what to do. Relax for awhile now; have a rest.

BENNETT

Yes, I suppose so.

CLIVE

After all that.

BENNETT

Well thank you for helping.

CLIVE

No, no that's fine; anyone would've helped with ---

BENNETT

It's just, shit! One minute there he was walking along the jetty.

CLIVE

Yes, I know.

BENNETT

Poor bastard! And then bang ... just like that.

CLIVE

And you, right there next to him.

BENNETT

Yes I was, wasn't I? Just sitting there on the jetty, like I do, having a look at the paper, enjoying the sun, and then all that! Shit, I didn't have a bloody clue what to do.

CLIVE

But you did everything you could ... honestly.

BENNETT

I just got down there and started something I'd remembered from years ago ... somewhere.

CLIVE

And you did very well.

BENNETT

Well I've seen him round for years. What else could I do? We've said hello a few times; never really talked much. You know how it is.

CLIVE

Yes ... I do; know how it is I mean.

BENNETT

He was a quiet fellow I think; just stuck to him self and walked along here everyday with his dog; down along the beach and then up to the jetty. Jesus, his bloody dog! What happened with that beautiful golden dog after they took him away?

CLIVE

The woman who was talking to the police took the dog.

BENNETT

Well that's one thing then.

CLIVE

Yes.

BENNETT

And thanks for coming over here now too.

CLIVE

No problem at all. I just wanted to see how you were.

BENNETT

Well thank you; I really do appreciate it.

CLIVE

It's my pleasure ... honestly.

BENNETT

There he was, just was going along whistling; poor bastard was whistling a song ... I reckon it was an old song too ... and I was trying to work out what it was actually ... when he past me ... what he was whistling ... and then ... bang.

CLIVE

You want a cigarette?

BENNETT

Why not; bugger it all; yes I will. Thanks. No, no on second thoughts ... I won't. I couldn't ever start up again.

CLIVE

No; no, I'm not really feeling like one myself ... surprisingly.

HE COUGHS HARD AND HOLDS HIS CHEST

BENNETT

Sounds like you could do without it anyway.

CLIVE

Yes, I'm sure I could.

BENNETT

Mabelene would go absolutely stark raving mad at me if I ever started smoking again.

CLIVE

Mabelene is?

BENNETT

My wife; Mabelene.

CLIVE

Oh Ok.

BENNETT

You know, I really don't know if I did that right, to him I mean; pushing and panting. I could've bugged the whole thing up. I was trying to work out if it was five or ten presses, then the breath. That's what I was doing, when I was down there with him; trying to work out how many bloody pushes on the chest before the breath; actually I didn't even know where to bloody press; and I can still taste him, his mouth ... like coffee ... like strong bitter coffee.

CLIVE

Here, have a sip of this then. BEER

BENNETT

HE HAS A SIP

I shouldn't. Battled this stuff for years too. Bugger it though. Thanks, mm that's nice.

CLIVE

Here ... I've got another can in my pocket too. Here ... you have it ... go on.

BENNETT

Thanks mate.

OPENS A CAN OF BEER / GULPS

That's lovely. Thanks. Drinking beer this early in the day.

CLIVE

Well I suppose this isn't just any day.

BENNETT

No ... I suppose its bloody not. Not a bloody clue; five or ten was going through my head as I was pushing away on him.

CLIVE

I really, really am sure it was five.