

Taverna of the Wolves
a play

by
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DRAFT 1.0

CAST OF CHARACTERS

STEPH WATSON

HENRIETTA

KLEOPOMPUS - OWNER AT THE TAVERNA LYKOREA

BASTIEN - WORKS AS A BUS DRIVER, PIZZA DELIVERY GUY, AND
ARTIST'S MODEL

JO

EARL

The play takes place on the street, on a bus, and on the front (street side) Terrasse of a Taverna somewhere in Montreal.

Mid right is a bus - this can be an actual bus with the side facing the audience removed, or it can be represented by seats and benches arranged to some degree as per a transit bus- see attached diagram- a bus door with mechanism would be a nice addition to this.

SCENE 1: LOST

(Lights up.)

(Up left there is a row of shops and houses. Down left there are a couple of benches next to a bus stop. STEPH WATSON sits on a bench, ass on the back and feet on the seat. A book lies open on STEPH'S lap. Jo enters stage right and is obviously searching for something on the ground. Steph reads. Jo searches in front of the buildings, then looks both ways as checking for traffic and walks down to the bus stop and looks on the ground. Steph looks up when Jo approaches.)

HUM OF TRAFFIC.

STEPH

Hey, how are you?

(Jo looks at Steph and makes a so-so hand gesture, then points to the ground around the bench.)

STEPH

What did you lose?

(Jo mimes turning a key in a lock.)

STEPH

You lost your key? Don't worry. It must be here somewhere. I'll help you look.

(Steph gets up and puts the book away in the knapsack. Then both Steph and Jo search the ground thoroughly, even dropping at times to their hands and knees to do so.)

HUM OF TRAFFIC

STEPH

Y'know Jo, it's been a strange day so far. This morning I had a call from Henri, y'know that hot little dancer Earl's been hanging with. We never exchanged two words before and now she calls and wants to have supper. So of course I said yes.

(Jo looks surprised and makes a face.)

STEPH

I mean, I asked but she didn't say why, just said she wants to talk about something. And when I asked if Earl would join us, she laughed and said no. So y'know, I think maybe she likes me. This might be like a real date. I can't remember the last time I had a date Jo but it is a long long time. Of course, I know, I do know that she might just want to talk to me about something. Ask my advice, or maybe to borrow money. But then why invite me out, eh, if all she wants is a loan?

HUM OF TRAFFIC AND THE
EXHALATIONS OF A BUS AS
IT APPROACHES.

(Jo stands up, shrugs, and points in the direction of the bus.)

STEPH

Ready to give up?

(Jo nods.)

HUM OF TRAFFIC AND THE
NOISES OF A BUS
STOPPING AND OPENING
ITS DOORS.

STEPH

Alright. I have a few hours to kill.
Going to go the library. Wanna come?

(Jo smiles and nods. Steph grabs the knapsack, pulls out some money, and boards the bus. Jo follows.)

STEPH
 Bonjour, Hello. For two.

(Steph stuffs the money in the fare box and smiles at the driver. The Bus Driver nods and smiles back.)

BASTIEN
 Allo you there, my funny friend Jo.
 And how are you and where you go?

STEPH
 We're going to the library. You're
 friends with Jo? How do you know each
 other?

HUM OF TRAFFIC AND THE
 NOISES OF THE BUS DOORS
 CLOSING AND THE BUS
 PULLING BACK INTO
 TRAFFIC.

BASTIEN
 Bastien is my name.
 Bus driving is my game.
 And Jo,
 he like bus riding
 every day
 he rides
 and plays
 and so we friends,

STEPH
 Oh, that makes sense.

(Jo smiles and makes a hat doffing gesture to the driver,
 squeezes past Steph to take a seat.)

BASTIEN
 cause we keep meeting.

STEPH
 I understand that. Jo is easy to like.
 Any chance you found Jo's key? It appears
 to have gotten lost somewhere.

BASTIEN
 Don't think so. Sorry.

(Steph takes a seat near Jo who sits happily looking out
 the window and swinging legs back and forth. Steph sighs
 deeply.)

STEPH
 I dunno Jo. Maybe it's crazy to be so
 excited but I am. I like this girl. And
 I know, I know, she's been hooking up

with Earl, but Earl is not a serious guy. I mean, Earl is busy with everyone. Earl won't care, I'm sure. I dunno. Maybe I'm making justifications. Fooling myself. About all of it. It just made me realize how damn lonely I am Jo. I didn't think I was. I mean, I have my books. I'm never bored. But ever since she called me, I keep thinking, how nice it would be, to hold someone, to be held.

BASTIEN

Eh! Prochaine arrêt: bibliothèque!

(Steph and Jo stand and move toward the doors.)

NOISES OF THE BUS
PULLING OVER AND THE
BUS DOORS OPENING.

STEPH

Merci Bastien!
Anyway Jo, even if she isn't interested, my reaction tells me it is time to move on. Y'know I'm divorced now more than 5 years and this will be my first date, if it is a date. We're gonna meet around 7 at the Taverna, the one on Park near that old restaurant supply place. Taverna Lykorea. Do you know it? Henri said it's her favourite place. Why don't you come Jo? Bring Bobby and meet me there. C'mon! You'll act surprised, like you didn't know we'd be there. And if not supper, at least come for dessert, and wine!! My treat!

(Jo and Steph exit the bus, lights fade to black. End of scene.)

SCENE 2: FISH AND RETSINA

(Lights up)

(Up left there is a row of houses and a Greek restaurant, Taverna Lykorea, with a few tables set up on the front Terrasse. Down left there is a bench next to a bus stop. Steph is sitting at one of the tables looking at a menu and drinking a coffee. Kleo is busy clearing dirty dishes off one of the other tables. Steph looks at a wristwatch and then down at the menu. Kleo carries the dishes into the Taverna and then returns with the tray, sets it down and puts the empty coffee cup from Steph's table onto it.)

KLEOPOMPUS

So, you liked it?

(Steph nods.)

STEPH

Thanks, it was delicious.

KLEOPOMPUS

It's your first time, yes, having Greek coffee? Maybe next you like to try retsina?

(Steph looks at a wristwatch.)

STEPH

No, I *am* waiting for a friend. Maybe first I can just ask you a couple of questions about the menu. It says here that you have a vegetarian platter but the picture shows something that looks like a skewer of shrimp and scallops? Is that right?

KLEOPOMPUS

Yes. The vegetarian platter.

STEPH

So the vegetarian platter *does* have shrimp and scallops on it? That's not very vegetarian.

KLEOPOMPUS

There is no meat!

STEPH

I'm sorry but shrimp and scallops are not vegetarian. Please, recommend something else you have that *is* vegetarian. I'm allergic and can't eat the platter.

KLEOPOMPUS

Okay, okay. So try Psari Plaki, here. It's very good. My mother's recipe. Lots of tomatoes, lots of vegetables. Very nice!

STEPH

Doesn't "psari" mean fish?

(Kleo nods.)

KLEOPOMPUS

Good. Psari today Tilapia.

STEPH

No, I really can't —

(Kleo whisks away the tray and disappears into the taverna leaving STEPH in mid-sentence. Steph looks down at the menu. After a couple of minutes, Kleo returns with the tray and sets down a dish of olives, some bread, and a glass in front of Steph.)

KLEOPOMPUS
Retsina! My own making.

STEPH
I can't eat fish.

(Steph sniffs the liquid in the glass. Kleo sets the tray on another table and holds up another glass.)

KLEOPOMPUS
This is no fish. It is retsina. Retsina wine. Old family recipe. À votre santé!

(Kleo looks at Steph who responds by picking up and raising the glass.)

STEPH
Merci! To your health!

(A woman enters stage left and heads straight for Steph's table at the Taverna.)

HENRIETTA
Sorry I am late. I missed my metro and the bus was detoured! Forgive me?

(Steph stands and the two hug awkwardly and do the Montreal 2 cheek kiss.)

STEPH
Oh Henrietta! Of course I forgive you! Don't be silly. I wasn't even waiting long and anyway, I'm just happy that you're here. You look quite wonderful you know. And I hope you don't mind me saying, but you smell very good too. Delicious even. Like blackberries.

(Steph moves to pull out a chair for Henri while Henri turns to Kleo who is beaming happily at her and immediately makes a little bow.)

KLEOPOMPUS
Welcome my dear lady Henri, welcome, welcome. Tonight you are eating yes? And retsina yes?

(Henri smiles and nods.)

HENRIETTA
A bottle please Kleo.

KLEOPOMPUS

And like always, pikilia?

(Henri sits, looks up at Kleo and smiles.)

HENRIETTA

That would be lovely.

(Kleo smiles and bows again before heading back into the taverna.)

STEPH

You come here regularly?

HENRIETTA

Yes, it is my favourite. I hope you will like it. I just ordered appetizers.

STEPH

The palikia he mentioned?

HENRIETTA

No, no, not palikia, it is pi-kil-i-a. A big plate of appetizers. To go with the retsina! Very nice, you will see.

STEPH

Okay. I'll trust you.

HENRIETTA

Good. We will trust each other. I hope you won't mind. Today I need a friend to talk to. Someone who is kind, like you.

(Kleo returns and sets down a bottle of retsina and two glasses.)

STEPH

Thank you very much.

HENRIETTA

Yes, thank you Kleo.

STEPH

So what is it? What do you want to talk about Henri? Are you okay?

HENRIETTA

I am okay. But...

(Henri pauses, looks down, picks at the tablecloth, then looks up, picks up the glass of retsina, raises it toward Steph with a nod and downs the contents in a gulp and set the glass down hard. She picks the bottle up and fills the glasses again.)

STEPH

But what? Talk Henri.

HENRIETTA

Okay well, the problem is Earl. He is a nice man and handsome and the sex is very good. He likes it and he likes women. He is really a great guy. I am not sorry but now it's enough. We are only supposed to be fun, he and I. We decided that. In the beginning we had so much fun together. So much. And it was wonderful. Spectacular even. But now, yesterday, he bought me something, in a little box. But I knew, as soon I saw that box. So I wouldn't take it. And he cried. Cried because I won't marry him.

STEPH

It was a ring?

HENRIETTA

In the box, yes, I suppose it was. He said so but I never looked. Earl is a good man. I like him, but I don't want to marry him. I don't want to marry anybody. I am not that type. I think it is not necessary.

STEPH

So you said no...?

HENRIETTA

Yes, I said no. And Earl he cried and cried. And then he told me if I don't marry him, he will never speak anymore.

(Kleo returns and sets down a large platter and two plates.)

KLEOPOMPUS

Pikilia! Ready to order?

HENRIETTA

Thank you Kleo, not yet. Give us 15 minutes, to talk first. Then we'll order.

KLEOPOMPUS

Okay, I'll be back!

(Kleo leaves again and goes back into the Taverna. Steph raises a glass to Henri.)

STEPH

Thank you Henri, Santé!

HENRIETTA

Santé my dear Steph! Thank you for meeting me. You are a very kind person.

STEPH

aaaw shucks Henri, I'm not so kind. I'm selfish. You are a beautiful woman and all day, ever since you called, I have been hoping...

(Pause)

HENRIETTA

Yes? What is it you hope? To be my lover maybe? Oh yes look, you are blushing. Good.

I like that you can blush. I think it very sexy. If you want to make love with me Steph, it is okay, I would like that too. After supper. You come to my place. If you want. But first I need talking. I'm confused about Earl. And not only that. I met someone else. I think maybe he is crazy, but i want to know him more. I want to kiss his nose, and ride on a ferris wheel with him, and, and I'm scared.

STEPH

Why are you scared?

HENRIETTA

Because, because he is, he is strange. So he makes me nervous. I want to run away when I see him and also to grab him, to feel him close, bite him and be dangerous together. That's why I'm scared I guess, because I might do crazy things. I mean I want to. Such insane feelings I can't tell you. Ever since I met him, I am thinking of how he looks, of his crooked smile, of his lovely bum, of his voice, and the way he walks. I nearly invited him already but I'm afraid to start because maybe then I can't stop.

STEPH

Hmmm Sounds like you are infatuated. But why do you invite me home when you really want that guy? Tell me what all this is.

(Steph points to the platter. Henrietta smiles and points to the various items on the platter.)

HENRIETTA

Dolmades, which is grape leaves stuffed in rice. Skordalia it is potato with garlic. This one is cheese. Olives of course, and taramasalata, fish eggs.

STEPH

I'm allergic to fish.

HENRIETTA

Oh, really allergic? But this is only fish eggs. Not fish. And only in this part. The rest has no fish.

STEPH

But all on the same plate with the fish eggs. I can't risk it, really. It could make me very sick.

HENRIETTA

Ai yi yi, I am so sorry Steph. You said on the phone but I didn't understand. This is a fish restaurant. Kleo and his whole family, they were fishermen. It is the specialty here, but they also have meat. Maybe you would like to order lamb?

STEPH

I'm sorry to be difficult Henri but I am vegetarian. I will not eat lamb.

HENRIETTA

No problem my friend! No worries. Drink your wine. We have olives and bread, and I have a very good idea! Do you like pizza?

(Steph nods and drinks some more wine.)

STEPH

Yes, I like pizza.

(Henri stands up from the table.)

HENRIETTA

Good. I will go tell Kleo what I want and for you I get a vegetable cheese pizza. Is it okay?

STEPH

Thanks Henri, yes, that will be fine. Order us another bottle of retsina also, okay?

(Henri walks toward the taverna and lights fade to black.
End of scene 2.)

SCENE 3: FINISHED

(Lights up. Steph and Henrietta still sit at the Taverna drinking. Bastien stands next to their table holding a pizza box.)

HENRIETTA

How much it is?

BASTIEN

Fucking hell Henrietta! Is that really all what you have to say to me? Really?

(Pause. They look at one another. Silent. Finally.)

BASTIEN (CONT'D)

It's fourteen dollars, tax and tip included. You look real nice tonight Henrietta. Great colour. Y'know, if you're interested, I've been getting some easy work, evenings mostly. It's fun and the money's pretty good and, and probably you'd like it. Posing for the art classes. Mondays and Wednesdays. They always like to have new people. I could introduce you. You could, well, never mind. I can see you're busy and here I am intruding on your nice evening. But do think about the classes. I think you'd like it.

STEPH

I'll get this Henri.

HENRIETTA

Oh no, I invited you. Please put away the money. Next time I let you pay. This time is my treat.

(Henrietta opens her purse and pulls out a twenty. She bats her eyes flirtatiously as she hands the money to Bastien.)

HENRIETTA

Keep the change Bastien, and pull up a chair. Please. Have a drink with us. We can talk later about posing.

BASTIEN

Gosh Henri, I don't—

STEPH

Why not just sit?!

(Bastien sits. Henri pours retsina for everyone and Steph dishes up pizza.)

BASTIEN

Henrietta, I want you to know I've been thinking about all that you said, and I agree. I agree to everything.

STEPH

Who is this guy?

(Bastien takes a big swig of retsina and immediately makes a face, turns and spits it out on the floor.)

BASTIEN

I think it is among the most revolting things I have tasted. What is that? You know I was serious Henrietta.

STEPH

It's retsina. A Greek wine made with pine sap for flavour. I've seen you before?!

HENRIETTA

You really meant it?

STEPH

Well look at that. Here come's our friend Earl. And little Jo along with him. Don't they look the happy pair.

(Enter Jo and Earl, entwined.)

BASTIEN

Jo? You mean my friend with the key? Do you know if it was found?

STEPH

That's why I know you! You're the bus driver? Why, I mean, do you also, how many jobs do you have?

(Earl and Jo go under one of the tables so they are hidden by the cloth. It begins to shake. They are either conjuring spirits, or having sex.)

BASTIEN

Keeping busy. That's all.

STEPH

And how do you know Henrietta? It sounds like there's something pretty intense between you.

BASTIEN

Lust brought us together. She's succeeded at convincing me that I work too much and should give it up to devote my time to her. She did also mention needing lots of alone time so I think it will work out pretty well. We fuck well anyway.

STEPH

Wow! I am envious.

BASTIEN

Makes me crazy just being around her. Best feeling I ever had. Also she stinks nice. Like summer: blackberries and rosehips.

(Steph sighs, looks longingly at Henrietta, and mumbles quietly.)

STEPH

Tomorrow will be a library day. Maybe there will be something new from Elizabeth Hay.

(Bastien climbs up onto the table, knocking over bottles, glasses, and dishes in the process. He then stands up very straight and tall and bellows out a loud ballad-like love song to Henrietta, with a few amorous asides for Kleo.)

BASTIEN

NOW LISTEN HENRIETTA, NOW!, PLEASE
HENRIETTA, PLEASE! SAY YOU
WILL, HENRIETTA, SAY YOU WILL, PLEEEEEEASE,
JUST SAY YOU WILL, TODAY MY GIRL, YOU AND
I WILL TOGETHER FLY, OR MAYBE DRIVE,
ACROSS THE LAND TO MEET THE SEA WHERE YOU
AND ME MY LOV-E-LEEEEEEEEE HENREEEE-
ETTAAA.AND MY FRIEND, KLEEEEEEO, YOU ARE
SOOOOOO GOOD TO ME, GOOD TO ME, GOOD TO
MEEEEE, MY SWEEEEEEET KLEOOOOOOOO!
I love you Henrietta,
I do.
AND I DON'T WANT TO OWN YOU, I JUST WANNA
HOLD YOU, SO PLEEEEEEASE HENREEEEE-ETTA,
SAAAAAY YOU WILL.
JUST SAY IT, JUST SAY IT. I'M WAITING
WAITIIIIING FOR THOSE WORDS

STEPH

Geez, what a racket!

BASTIEN

NOW HENRIETTA NOW!, PLEASE HENRIETTA,
PLEASE! SAY YOU WILL, HENRIETTA, SAY YOU
WILL, PLEEEEEEASE, JUST SAY YOU WILL,

TODAY MY GIRL, YOU AND I WILL TOGETHER
FLY, OR MAYBE DRIVE, ACROSS THE LAND TO
MEET THE SEA WHERE YOU AND ME MY LOV-E-
LEEEEEEEEE HENREEEE-ETTAAA.

STEPH

I need ear plugs.

BASTIEN

OH HENRIETTA! YOU MUST AGREE. AGREE RIGHT
NOW. SAY YOU WILL. NOT TOMORROW OR NEXT
WEEK OR SOMEDAY WHEN SOME WHATEVER THING
HAPPENS BUT NOW. I MEAN WE GO RIGHT NOW!
OTHERWISE, I WILL JUMP. I WILL JUMP RIGHT
TO MY DEATH. YOU SEE IF I DON'T!

HENRIETTA

Oh my beautiful Bas! Of course I will go
with you. Anywhere you want. I think you
are nutty as a jar of peanut butter but I
adore you and what the hell. Let's do it.
Uh uh, but we better do it fast, like
right now, because look, Kleo is taking
out the harmonica. You know if he starts
with that it's trouble. Some witch from
the old country put a spell on it. That
man can make you dance and dance and
dance. Last time I could hardly walk for
weeks. It's good fun mind you, but bloody
exhausting. Fucking hell he's -

(Kleo puts the harmonica to his lips and everyone
immediately begins dancing a crazy frenetic gyration.)

BASTIEN

Please, make it stop.

BASTIEN

Quit!!!! Quit the fucking harmonica.
Pleeeeeease! I can't take it. I can not
take it. Please Kleo, please. Please
stop, oooooohhhhhhhhh

(Kleo stops playing and immediately they all stop
dancing.)

BASTIEN

Relief! Thank you Kleo.

BASTIEN

So. Henrietta, I really meant it. About
going to Nova Scotia. I know a pretty
little town on the Minas Basin. Y'know,
the Bay of Fundy? The highest tides of
anywhere man, of anywhere. Highest in the
world. More than 50 feet some days. Go
with me!

HENRIETTA

You really want that?

BASTIEN

That is what I want more than anything. You and me, walking on a beach, looking at the sea, making love. And you know. This town has a theatre. Only in the summer but maybe together, you and me, we could like take over or something. And i was thinking, it might be a nice place to put together a winter kind of a Fringe Ice Man (as opposed to Burning) Festival. Think about it Henrietta! I know you think I'm crazy. And I lied to you at first, it's true. I never should of told you I was French. I just thought that -

HENRIETTA

You just thought what?!

BASTIEN

Ummmm, well, i guess i thought if you knew i was really some London theatre guy, that you wouldn't be interested.

HENRIETTA

Oh Bas, you make me crazy. I can not help but want to bite you.

BASTIEN

Very lucky for me!

STEPH

Yes, lucky for him.

BASTIEN

Why are we waiting?

HENRIETTA

I don't know Bas.

BASTIEN

Xcellent time to exit baby, let's get the hell out of here. Are you ready?

HENRIETTA

Don't I look ready?

BASTIEN

You look ready to be devoured. You make me feel like the big bad wolf.

(Henrietta sighs and looks adoringly at Bastien.)

(Kleo comes back out of the Taverna and claps a few times.)

KLEO
Closing time my friends!

HENRIETTA
So c'mon, let's go.

KLEO
The hour is late!

BASTIEN
Zoot Allures! I think we are getting to
the end of this complicated evening.
Hurrah!

(Fade to black.)