

## The Java Bean Café Excerpt

### TIME AND PLACE

The present, a few days before Christmas. A small city or town in Eastern Canada.

### SETTING

The stage is divided in two areas:

- Two-thirds are the café. There is a small counter at centre stage. Behind it is a narrow counter with the usual stuff found in a coffee house: coffee urns, cups, maybe a display of goodies, etc. Cupboards are above. Above the cupboards is a sign that reads: Java Bean Café. There are a number of small tables, along with their chairs. There are three exits to the café. One is a hall upstage that leads to the bathrooms and LISA's upstairs apartment. One is a door upstage and on one side of the counter. It leads to the kitchen. And one, an imaginary door, with just a door frame. It is in front of the stage and leads to a set of stairs down into the audience level. This is the entrance to the café. While there is no actual door, when someone goes through the door frame, we hear the sound of a doorbell or buzzer that would have been activated by opening the door. The café has been decorated for Christmas.
- The other third of the stage is the living room of BRANDON's family home. There is a love seat and a small easy chair. There is a floor lamp between the chair and the love seat. In front of the love seat is a coffee table. There is a hallway opening upstage that leads to the entrance hall. Just a suggestion of the hall can be seen.

### MEMORY SCENES

Throughout the acts, there are MEMORY SCENES of events that BRANDON or LISA remembers. For these scenes, the characters of IRENE, KIM, JASON, KEVIN and RANDY need something to indicate that they represent the past (e.g., hair style or length, clothes, etc.) In IRENE'S case, she is supposed to be sixteen. The others are in grade 12. The lighting should be different than the regular scenes, cooler with colours more pronounced. It needs to convey that the action is not happening at the present moment. In the MEMORY SCENES for the characters of BRANDON and LISA, they remain the same characters.

ACT ONE

SCENE 1

Lights up on the living room. BRANDON is on the easy chair, talking on his cell phone. It's late at night.

BRANDON

Hey Ron, it's me. Kooch ... Brandon ... Brandon Kuchar ... Yeah, it's been a long time ... Right. A voice from the past. How's it going? ... Yeah, I'm doing good. You still in Chelsea? ... Oh, wow. That's cool, man. Park Avenue. You've come up in the world. You still with Elinor? ... Oh, that's too bad ... No, the band broke up ... No, that was two bands ago ... It's no big deal. We weren't going anywhere ... Really? Those songs still getting air play ... You're kidding. Well, I better track down my former agent. I haven't seen any money ... Yeah, I was afraid you were going to bring that up. How much was it again? ... You know I did send you some money. You got it, didn't you? ... Well, I'm sorry about that, but I'm clean now. For two years ... Yeah. A new leaf. I can send you something now ... No, no. A debt's a debt. I want to keep it square between us. So I've been working on some new songs. Some of the best stuff I've ever done ... Different. A little less pop. More Jazzy. ... I was wondering, Ron, about setting up a recording session. ... Oh, you're with them now ... Partner. Wow. That's cool ... Yeah, that's why I called. I took a chance you had the same number ... Yeah, while everything is fresh in my head ... No, like I said, not with those guys anymore. Craig got busted and Davey quit because his wife was having a baby. ... Yeah. Shit happens. Listen, can you put a group together for me? I want the best this time. I'm going to do some demos here. They'll give you an idea of where I'm at ... Yeah, I realize that. But money's no problem ... Something like that. My father just passed away and I'm settling up his estate ... Thanks ... No, I missed the funeral.

*(DAKOTA enters. She is dressed for bed.)*

DAKOTA

Brandon, come on to bed. I'm tired. The bus ride took forever. *(She sits on the arm of the easy chair and listens to the conversation.)* Is that —?

BRANDON

Sshhh.

*(into the phone; wipes the nervous sweat off his brow)* No, no, not you. That was for my girlfriend. Dakota Wetherbee. Maybe you heard of her. She was one of the runner ups on the Great Canadian Talent Search ... It's like American Idol. She's real good. You'll be impressed. So about some studio time. Say a week. I'm thinking some brass, a sax, a piano, a bass. And it's got to be a double bass ... Yeah, and a drum kit. Sure. So what are we talking about for everything? Studio time, musicians, ... Well, yeah, backup singers is a great idea. I hadn't thought of that ... And a publicity package? Sure. So that would include CDs, a launch party? ... Great ... Interviews. That's cool. Okay, so give it to me in round numbers for everything ... Thirty. No, that's doable. Definitely doable ... Okay. I'll send you some demos in a day or two. I'll leave the musicians to you. You know the scene better than I do ... No, I'm not in New York. I'm back home ... In Carleton. So if I get them to you, say by the end of the week, can you set something up for next week? I know that's not a lot of notice, but ... Oh, that's right. Next week

is New Year's Eve ... Okay ... That sounds good. So where should I send the demos? Okay, let me get something to write on. (*to DAKOTA*) Pen, paper. (*She exits. He nervously wipes the sweat off his brow.*) You see any of the old group? ... Oh, really. In L.A. That's great. You ever run into Baily? ... In London. What's he doing, playing the Palladium? ... Oh, the BBC. That's cool. How about Henri? The last text I got from him he was in Nice, relaxing on the beach ... Really? At the BBC, too ... Married Baily's sister ... Two kids. Well, good for him. (*She comes back with a pen and a page torn from a newspaper.*) Okay, give it to me. (*He records address.*) I'll send it by FedEx. You'll get it before the end of the week ... Talk to you soon ... Yeah, Merry Christmas to you, too, Ron ... Bye ... Yeah, it's been good talking to you ... Can't wait.

*(He ends the call and leans back into the chair. He wipes his brow.)*

BRANDON (continued)

Everything's set. January fifth.

DAKOTA

Shit! Do you mean we have to stay here until then?

BRANDON

No. As soon as we do the demos and my dad's estate is settled, we'll go to New York.

DAKOTA

And Times Square for New Years?

BRANDON

*(not crazy about that)* Sure.

DAKOTA

Thank god. We've only been here a day and already I'm bored to death.

BRANDON

Well, try to overcome your ennui until after we do the demos. I'm counting on you, Dakota. I want Ron to be impressed.

DAKOTA

What's on-wee? I'm not sick.

BRANDON

Forget it. I'll be up in a minute. I just want to lock up the house.

DAKOTA

Okay. Oh my God! I never knew you could be so tired. (*She kisses him.*) SOON! (*She exits.*)

SCENE 2

MEMORY SCENE

A spot comes up on SCOTT. He's upstage. He is wearing his work uniform.

SCOTT

Hey, Brand, don't forget to take out the trash before you go to school. And remember, you're coming in after hockey practice. Alan's still off sick and I got two brake jobs that are a week behind. If you want to earn that money for training camp this summer, you got to put in the time, buddy. So don't go wandering off to the Bean like you did last week. If it's coffee you're after, you know there's always a pot in the office. I'm counting on you, buddy.

*(The living room goes BLACK.)*

SCENE 3

The lights come up on the coffee shop as if someone is turning on a few light switches. LISA enters from the kitchen door. She wears a sweatshirt that reads: "I'm a coffee Bean addict." She goes to the front door frame and mimes unlocking the door. It's six in the morning and still dark outside. She goes behind the counter and begins making the various coffees. LEXIE enters the café. She's dressed for winter and carries a knapsack. As she goes through the door frame, a jingle announces her presence. LISA doesn't turn around on the sound.

LISA

*(her back to LEXIE)* Coffee'll be a few minutes.

LEXIE

You don't happen to know when the morning bus comes in from Montreal?

LISA

*(turns around)* No I don't, dear. But if you go across the street, there's a display in the terminal.

LEXIE

I just come from there but the display's not working and there's no one around to ask. He was supposed to come in on the late-night bus. So I guess he didn't make it.

LISA

Who, love?

LEXIE

Who? Oh, Tyler. I just got in from Medicine Hat. And he was supposed to be waiting for me.

LISA

That's a long bus ride.

LEXIE

It sure is.

LISA

There should be some schedules on the information counter desk. Did you check there?

LEXIE

I did, but there wasn't any.

LISA

Well, it's just past six so I imagine a bus should be arriving soon. I know there's at least three buses from Montreal.

LEXIE

Do you mind if I wait here? He told me to meet him here if I got in first.

LISA

Sure. Coffee?

LEXIE

Yes, please.

LISA

Be ready soon. Hi, I'm Lisa.

LEXIE

I'm Lexie.

LISA

Well, Lexie, you look pretty worn out. Do you have family here?

LEXIE

No.

LISA

How about your friend?

LEXIE

I think so.

LISA

What's his last name?

LEXIE

Reynolds.

LISA

Is he Mitch Reynolds's son?

LEXIE

I don't know. He never talked much about his family.

LISA

I can give Mitch a call if you want.

LEXIE

No ... uh, I don't know if he's his dad, so ...

LISA

Sure ... Just have a seat. I'll bring you your coffee. How do you like it?

LEXIE

Soy milk, one sugar, grated chocolate, no cinnamon and some foam, but not a latte or a cappuccino.

LISA

Got it.

*(LEXIE sits at an upstage table. She takes out a phone from her knapsack and throughout the rest of the scene, plays with it trying to get a signal. When it doesn't seem to be working, she spends some time searching through her knapsack for her charger, which she never finds. LISA continues getting the coffees ready.)*

*(KEVIN enters. He is casually dressed with an open-collar white shirt with "Babcock's Pharmacy" printed on the front. He stops by the front door and looks around, settling his gaze on LEXIE. LISA looks over her shoulder at him. As they talk, she continues setting up the morning's coffee and treats.)*

LISA

Morning, Kevin. You're early.

KEVIN

It's cold out there. Is sleeping beauty up yet?

LISA

No, I imagine she's waiting for Prince Charming.

KEVIN

And I'm not it?

LISA

Sorry. I'm a little snappish this morning. Irene was supposed to open up, but she's sleeping like the baby she used to be. Why are you up so early? You don't open until nine.

KEVIN

Inventory. I've been trying to get it done before Christmas. Well ... tell her I was here looking for her.

LISA

You should tell her yourself, Kevin.

KEVIN

Yeah, I know. But we ... uh ... had a sort of a disagreement yesterday. I was hoping to catch her before the place filled up.

LISA

Well, join the club. I've been arguing with ever since she got back. I can't make her see reason. Maybe you can.

KEVIN

Then she's still planning on going to Hawaii?

LISA

Oh, I don't know. I can't get much out of here these days. Every time I bring up any subject that concerns her, she clams up. I don't know where she thinks she's going to get the money to go anywhere. I certainly don't have it. She says she'll get a job but she can't work in the States without a visa. Oh, I don't know. I was hoping you and she would get together.

KEVIN

Yeah, well, so was I. So am I.

LISA

She told you about Stephen, did she?

KEVIN

Some. Not much.

LISA

What a mess. Two marriages gone down the drain. At least I had the good sense not to get married again.

KEVIN

So what happened? All she said was that Stephen was in jail. He didn't do anything to her, did he?

LISA

In a manner of speaking, I guess. She wouldn't give me the details either but I got Jason to find out for me. Two years for insider trading. And one year for suppressing evidence. The fines took everything they had. As far as I can tell, she left Toronto with nothing more than her suitcase.

KEVIN

You got to expect her to feel some anger.

LISA

Of course, I do. I just wish she didn't take it out on me.

KEVIN

Me, too. I'll come back in a while.

LISA

Should I tell her you were in, assuming Sleeping Beauty awakens?

KEVIN

No, you better not. I don't want to seem too eager.

LISA

I could send her next door with your coffee.

KEVIN

No. I don't want her to refuse to see me. That's a bad tactical manoeuvre.

LISA

So you're on manoeuvres now. Kevin, that's not an attitude that's going to win her heart. You got to be straight with her. I think she's had enough manoeuvres for a few life times.

KEVIN

(He solutes.) Yes, general. Well, c'est la vie. I'll be back later with a frontal attack.

(He exits. She brings LEXIE's coffee to her.)

LEXIE

You don't have a charger, do you? My phone's dead and I lost my charger somewhere.

LISA

I have one. Let me see your phone. (LEXIE hands her the phone. LISA examines it.) I'm not sure. I think mine takes a different connection. It's upstairs. I'll have to wait until my daughter's down.

*(BLACKOUT)*

SCENE 4

On lights up on the coffee shop, there are now a few people in the café. Some sitting at the tables. Others in line at the counter. LEXIE is sitting at a table. The orders are ad-libbed. All the customers are dressed for winter, although some sitting at a table have their coats over the back of their chairs. Customers come and go. LISA is behind the counter. IRENE enters the café. She is wearing a jogging outfit and a toque.

LISA

*(as IRENE walks passed her towards the bathroom hall exit)* I thought you were still asleep.

IRENE

Do I look asleep?

LISA

It's past nine. I've been here all morning alone. David never came in. You were supposed to open up.

IRENE

I'll be right down. I want to shower first.

LISA

*(serving a customer)* Wait. *(That customer takes his or her coffee and exits café.)* I have to be at the dentist at nine-thirty. Your shower can wait.

IRENE

No it can't. You still have *(looks at watch)* fifteen minutes. *(She exits.)*

LEXIE

*(goes to LISA)* Did you find that charger?

LISA

*(angry at her daughter)* What!

LEXIE

The charger.

LISA

What? No. Sorry. I'll ask my daughter when she graces me with her presence.

LEXIE

Thanks. (*She goes back to her table.*)

(*KEVIN enters café.*)

LISA

You just missed her.

KEVIN

That was fast. I saw her run by the store.

LISA

Oh, she'll be back ... someday. In the meantime, I'm going to be late for Dr. Alomar.

KEVIN

Oh, don't worry about him. He's always overbooked.

LISA

Coffee?

KEVIN

I better get back. It's a full house this morning. Flu season, you know. Did she say anything about me?

LISA

As usual, she didn't say much.

KEVIN

I'll come by later.

LISA

No coffee?

KEVIN

Later. When I have a moment of peace to drink it. (*He exits.*)

(*BLACKOUT*)

SCENE 5

Lights up on the café. Some of the customers have gone. LEXIE is still at her table, staring at her empty coffee cup. LISA has her hat and coat on. After a moment, IRENE enters from the bathroom hall. She's dressed in casual clothes.

LISA

If that's five minutes, I'm Aunt Mable.

IRENE

We don't have an Aunt Mable.

LISA

That's what I mean. Now I'm going to be late.

IRENE

For chrissakes, mother, it's just down the street.

LISA

*(an angry whisper)* Don't swear in front of the customers.

*(IRENE shakes her head at her mother and goes behind the counter.)*

LISA (continued)

Where's your sweatshirt?

IRENE

I don't have it on.

LISA

I can see that. How are the customers going to figure out you work here?

IRENE

They're not stupid, mom.

LISA

Irene, how many times have I told you to wear it?

IRENE

Do you really want me to keep track? *(LISA groans.)* You're going to be late.

*(Exasperated, LISA exits the café as a customer comes in. The customer goes up to the counter to order.)*

*(BLACKOUT)*

SCENE 5

A few hours later in the café. LEXIE is still at her table. She's sleeping, her head down on the table. There are two people sitting at a table.

*(BRANDON and DAKOTA enter at the audience level. They stop before going up the stairs to the café entrance. BRANDON is wearing a ski jacket and scarf. His hands are in his pocket. DAKOTA is wearing a short, thin leather, unbuttoned jacket. Underneath the jacket, she has on a blouse opened at the neck. Her pants are tight, torn jeans. Her boots fashionably high, with heals and black.)*

DAKOTA

Damn it, Brandon, it's freezing out here. I thought we were going to take a cab to the recording studio.

BRANDON

I told you to wear the coat.

DAKOTA

It was too big and it looked awful on me. You didn't tell me we were going to walk.

BRANDON

Come on, let's go inside and get a coffee. You can warm up there.

DAKOTA

You know I don't drink coffee. You shouldn't drink it either. It's bad for your liver ...

BRANDON

*(guides her up the stairs)* Come on.

DAKOTA

... or something. *(entering the café)* And I'm freezing to death.

*(When they enter, IRENE is behind the counter with her back to them.)*

DAKOTA (continued)

And it's freezing in here, too.

BRANDON

It's not freezing in here. I told you, you should've worn the coat.

*(IRENE stiffens when she hears BRANDON's voice. DAKOTA remains by the entrance as BRANDON goes to the counter.)*

BRANDON (continued)

What do you want?

DAKOTA

To get warm.

BRANDON

(sighs) I'll get you a tea.

DAKOTA

Cranberry. It's got to be cranberry. Organic. It's good for your liver.

BRANDON

Okay, cranberry. (*to IRENE's back*) Excuse me. Can I get some service?

(*IRENE turns around. She's already over the shock of hearing his voice. Now her manner is controlled and cold.*)

BRANDON (continued)

(*unnerved*) Reenie! What are you doing here?

IRENE

(*controlled emotion*) Hello, Brandon.

BRANDON

Where's old man, Abadi?

IRENE

Retired. Mom bought the café last year.

BRANDON

Oh. (*a beat*) You working here? I thought you were in Toronto with ... what's his name.

IRENE

Stephen. (*a beat*) You're late. Scott's funeral was last week.

BRANDON

I know. Jās phoned me. (*a beat*) We weren't exactly on speaking terms.

DAKOTA

(*still at entrance*) Brandon, you said we'd be there by eleven. We don't have time for chatter.

IRENE

(*critically looking at DAKOTA*) Are you going to introduce me to your daughter?

BRANDON

Funny.

DAKOTA

(*after a long silence*) Brandon.

BRANDON

So how're been keeping?

IRENE

Haven't you heard?

BRANDON

Heard what?

IRENE

I'm married to a felon.

BRANDON

What?

IRENE

Never mind. Your dad asked about you in the hospital. I was there when he died.

BRANDON

Yeah, I know. Jās told me.

IRENE

It's kind of late to show up now.

BRANDON

*(trying to keep it light)* Better late than never for the old man.

IRENE

That's a mean thing to say.

DAKOTA

*(goes to counter)* How long does it take to get a tea around here? *(to BRANDON)* Did you tell her cranberry? *(to IRENE)* Cranberry. And it's got to be organic.

*(KEVIN enters. There is a bit of snow on him. He is still just in his white work shirt.)*

KEVIN

*(when he realizes it's BRANDON)* KOOCH! Damn it, man. I figured you'd be showing up. *(goes to him and gives him a hug)*

BRANDON

Kev.

KEVIN

You missed your dad's funeral. It was a real nice affair. Wasn't it, Reenie?

IRENE

*(with a hard look at BRANDON)* Real nice, Kevin.

DAKOTA

Brandon. Let's forget the tea. Can we go?

KEVIN

*(quickly sizing up the situation between DAKOTA and BRANDON)* Hi, I'm Kevin, Brandon's best friend.

DAKOTA

*(not impressed)* Hi. *(to BRANDON)* Can we go now?

KEVIN

Where you guys off to?

BRANDON

To Randy's. We're recording in New York the first of the year. We're just going to lay down some tracks that I can send to the studio there.

KEVIN

Hey, that's great. Last I heard of you, you were playing in some hotel in Kenora. A college friend of mine was in the audience. I left you a message. But that was a year ago. I guess you never got it. Hell, New York. That's great. I've still got all your albums. How about you, Reenie?

IRENE

*(a beat)* I don't know. *(She does have them.)*

KEVIN

You know, some of your songs still get played on Cool FM. Every once in a while. A blast from the past.

BRANDON

So they tell me in New York.

KEVIN

New York. Wow.

DAKOTA

Brandon. *(tugs at his sleeve)*

BRANDON

Got to go.

KEVIN

We got to catch up. Let's get together. You, me, Jās and Randy. My treat.

BRANDON

You bet.

KEVIN

*(as BRANDON and DAKOTA are about to exit)* God, it's good to see you, Kooch. I've been living vicariously ever since you left town.

BRANDON

*(more to himself)* Yeah. So have I.

*(He and DAKOTA exit.)*

KEVIN

Jeez, it's good to see that guy. I figured he'd show up sooner or later.

IRENE

When it's too late.

KEVIN

*(still thinking about BRANDON)* What?

IRENE

Skip it.

*(A customer comes in, goes to the counter and orders.)*

KEVIN

Don't be too hard on the guy. He always means well.

IRENE (continued)

What are you here for, Kevin? Coffee or the Brandon fan club? *(to CUSTOMER as she hands him/her coffee)* That'll be three-fifty. *(They exchange money.)*

KEVIN

I didn't know he was at the Bean. I just came in to get a coffee.

*(The CUSTOMER exits with coffee.)*

IRENE

Regular or large?

KEVIN

*(after glancing around at the people at the tables)* Can we talk?

IRENE

Isn't that what we're doing?

KEVIN

Reenie, what did I say that was so wrong? I'm just trying to help you out.

IRENE

Regular or large?

KEVIN

*(loudly)* Reenie!

IRENE

Quiet. You might scare the customers away. Mom wouldn't like that.

KEVIN

All I said was, why don't you come to work for me. There's night classes at the college. You could get your assistant's diploma in two years. In the meantime —

IRENE

Regular or large?

KEVIN

Okay, okay. Sorry I ever brought it up. I said I was sorry.

IRENE

*(a beat of silence)* Regular or large?

KEVIN

Damn it, Irene.

IRENE

I'm sorry, Kev. I don't mean to be such a bitch. I just had one of those days.

KEVIN

You know, you don't have to be so defensive with me. Lisa told me what happened. She found out from Jason. Look, I don't care what happened. Nobody cares. I'm just trying to help.

IRENE

I don't need any help. And speaking of help, how's your mom doing?

KEVIN

A little better. Still can't come downstairs on her own, but the nurse is working on it.

IRENE

You know, Kev, you're too old to be living at home. You ought to get a place of your own. You can afford it.

KEVIN

You should talk.

IRENE

Well, I'm broke. What's your excuse?

KEVIN

She's sick. She needs my help. (*a beat*) So, do you want to come over for Christmas dinner or what? You said yesterday ...

IRENE

I know what I said. I don't know. I told you I'd think about it.

KEVIN

No, you didn't. You said no. (*a beat*) It's not going to be a grand affair. Just me, mom and the nurse can chaperone. I'll ask Lisa, too.

IRENE

I don't want your mom to get the wrong idea.

KEVIN

What idea? It's no big deal. I'm just inviting an old friend to dinner, for petesakes.

IRENE

Anyway, I'm going to be gone by New Years. I told you I'm not interested in getting involved. With you or anyone.

KEVIN

Hell, I'm just talking about dinner, not a marriage proposal.

*(A few CUSTOMERS enter and line up at the counter. IRENE serves them over the dialogue below.)*

IRENE

If it's no big deal, why'd you get upset when I said no?

KEVIN

I didn't get upset.

IRENE

Well, somebody did, and it wasn't me. (*She's finishing up serving the CUSTOMERS.*)

KEVIN

*(about to go to the exit)* Oh, just forget about it.

IRENE

*(as CUSTOMERS prepare to leave)* Okay Kev, wait. I'll think about it. *(That stops him from leaving.)*

KEVIN

Thanks. It's no big deal. Really. I've ordered a turkey from Henderson's. And the nurse says she'll make a pumpkin pie. *(They stare at each other.)* No big deal.

IRENE

Do you still want a coffee?

KEVIN

No. Later. I better be getting back.

*(He exits. BLACKOUT.)*