

Rebecca on the Bus
a black comedy about a most absurd reality
by Jennie Webb

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Rebecca on the Bus

Characters:

JANE, a jaded woman

LYNNE, a guileless woman

REBECCA, a broken woman

Setting:

A place to meet and drink coffee, among other things, in an urban area.

Time:

The present, at least in some realities, pretty much

NOTE: There are other people in the space who are felt and heard, but not seen.

Casting:

Multi-racial casting is encouraged; there should be at least one woman of color if not more.

Dialogue Notes:

— *Indicates a character's dialogue is interrupted, by another character speaking, an event or a character abruptly shifting gears within a line of dialogue.*

... *Indicates a character is searching for words, does not complete a thought or leaves a line of dialogue open.*

Synopsis:

Oh, that Rebecca, always running late. This time, when she meets her friends at their local coffee spot, her unexpected (or is it?) excuse pulls back the curtain on what living in a rape culture could really mean. *Rebecca on the Bus* is a dark comedy about a most absurd reality.

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Rebecca on the Bus

Jane stands next to a tall pedestal table in a crowded Starbucks-like coffee spot. She's drinking from a covered paper cup. We hear commercial bustle around her, along with traffic and street noises in the background. The woman looks out front, through a window onto the street. A lot's going on and she is on top of it; her demeanor stakes a claim and challenges those around her. She checks her phone. Someone's late. No one's called. No surprise.

Lynne enters with a cup. Not hampered by the people around her, she moves directly to the table and also looks out front.

LYNNE:

No word? Nothing?

JANE:

No. But she does this all the time.

LYNNE:

Not calling?

JANE:

She mostly calls. But she's always late. And there's always a fabulous excuse. She had somewhat of a date last night, so maybe it'll be extra fabulous this time.

LYNNE:

What's a somewhat date?

JANE:

Movies with a friend. A man, but just a friend.

LYNNE:

So that's not a date at all.

JANE:

With her, you never know.

Short pause.

LYNNE:

I don't understand.

Rebecca enters. She moves with a disturbing awareness of the close proximity of people around her and the chaos outside. She's not quite covering up the fact that she's been through something, and has not come out of it whole.

JANE:

(to Rebecca) Hey, you!

REBECCA:
Hey!

JANE:
I was right, wasn't I? Hot night in the city?

REBECCA:
Well...

LYNNE:
You look terrible.

REBECCA:
Nice to see you, too.

JANE:
You look like a woman with a tale to tell.

LYNNE:
(to Rebecca) No. I'm serious. You really do look—

JANE:
(interrupting, to Lynne) Be a doll and get her something, would you?

LYNNE:
Like what?

JANE:
To drink.

REBECCA:
That would be great. Thanks.

LYNNE:
What should I—?

JANE:
(interrupting, to Lynne) Get her what I'm having. Tell 'em it's for me.

LYNNE:
But it's not for—

JANE:
(interrupting) It's okay. And see if they have any croissants left. The chocolate ones. If not chocolate, berry or something. But not cheese.

Short pause.

LYNNE:
All right.

She leaves.

REBECCA:
(after Lynne) Thanks!

JANE:
I sometimes think she lives on her own little planet, I really do.

Rebecca has made her way to the table.

So! Given your questionable appearance, I'm especially looking forward to the story behind your... *(checking the time)* 35-minute delay.

REBECCA:
I know. I'm sorry. And it's not even a—

JANE:
(interrupting) No, hang on for just a bit more. Our guileless friend has not, apparently, been privy to even one of your extraordinary excuses! What bizarre mishaps or accounts of barely missed busses do we have in store for us this time?

REBECCA:
Yeah, I wish! But—

JANE:
(interrupting) And I just noticed: You wore that last night, I'll bet! You didn't even go home to change, you... fast woman, you!

REBECCA:
I—

JANE:
(interrupting) No, no, no don't start yet. It's never as good the second time.

REBECCA:
How about the third time?

JANE:
I don't know, I never quite got the charm thing. But that's just me, I'm jaded.

REBECCA:
Right.

Lynne comes back in with a cup which she sets in front of Rebecca.

LYNNE:
No chocolate croissants.

JANE:
And no berry?

LYNNE:
No.

JANE:
So no croissants.

LYNNE:
No.

JANE:
Not even cheese?

Short pause.

LYNNE:
I didn't ask.

JANE:
Never mind. *(to Rebecca)* So! We're all on the edge of our figurative seats.
Beverages in hand. Tell all.

Pause.

REBECCA:
Well... Not much to tell. I was raped.

Perhaps she moves away to add something to her coffee.

JANE:
You were raped.

LYNNE:
You were raped?

JANE:
Again? You were raped again? Weren't you just raped—

REBECCA:
(interrupting) Yes, I was. I'm sorry, but this year has sucked. It's the third time.

LYNNE:
What third time?

JANE:
This year. Her third rape this year. *(to Rebecca)* Am I right?

REBECCA:
Right.

JANE:

You were on a date, though. If it was date rape, that shouldn't really count.

REBECCA:

It wasn't date rape.

JANE:

And next you're going to say it wasn't a date?

REBECCA:

He's a friend; it wasn't a date.

JANE:

Not much of a friend; even I draw the line at rape.

LYNNE:

Wait. You were raped. How'd it happen?

REBECCA:

The same way it always happens.

JANE:

Is it just me, or do men act like they have a license now?

LYNNE:

To rape?

JANE:

It's how they're raised: they think it comes with the equipment. *(to Lynne)* Any pastries at all up there?

LYNNE:

(to Rebecca) So it was your friend?

REBECCA:

No! He would never rape me.

JANE:

That's certainly an upside. *(to Lynne)* Scones. There's always scones. What about scones?

LYNNE:

I don't— *(to Rebecca)* What did happen, then?

REBECCA:

Oh, nothing out of the ordinary. You don't want to hear about it..

LYNNE:

I do!

REBECCA:

We just went to the movies, that's all.

JANE:

Argh. Movie theater rape. The worst; those floors are awful. That is a messy, messy rape.

REBECCA:

It was after the movie.

LYNNE:

Right after?

JANE:

(looking toward the counter) I wouldn't normally do this, but I'd settle for biscotti, if it comes down to that.

REBECCA:

No, it was late, so we thought we'd take a bus home. My friend and I.

LYNNE:

Right.

REBECCA:

There weren't a lot of people around; we didn't give it a second thought.

LYNNE:

No.

REBECCA:

And we didn't notice until we got on what kind of bus it was.

LYNNE:

What kind was it?

JANE:

Lemme guess: A bus with curtains.

LYNNE:

A what?

JANE:

In the back, for privacy. They're very popular, now. Because who wants a public rape? Rape is something you do in privacy of your own home, with the drapes drawn. Or in the occasional alley, shuttered storefront.

REBECCA:

Office cubicles.

JANE:

Bathroom stalls. That's always a go-to.

REBECCA:

Waking up after a party, having no idea what happened until you watch the videos...

LYNNE:

I don't understand.

JANE:

Don't tell me you haven't seen the busses. Rape busses. Handy dandy busses strung with curtains, built for rape?

LYNNE:

What? Really?

JANE:

No. But I think the City prides itself on adaptive re-use.

REBECCA:

Sometimes it's hard to tell what they are, especially at night. We didn't notice the curtains, or the men in the back until we were already moving, and...

JANE:

That's a hard road: A gang rape in traffic.

LYNNE:

Gang rape? How many of them were there?

REBECCA:

I don't— at least five. My friend tried to protect me, but...

JANE:

Ohhhh, that must have pissed them off. How is he?

LYNNE:

How is *he*?

JANE:

You have no idea what an angry rapist is capable of. I bet they roughed him up something terrible.

LYNNE:

(to Rebecca) How are you?

REBECCA:

I'm—

JANE:

(interrupting) She's fine. Late, but fine. And to be honest, on the excuse meter...

LYNNE:

She was raped For the third time. This year.

JANE:

You're talking like that's some kind of record.

LYNNE:

And by five men! *(to Rebecca)* All five?

JANE:

She doesn't get extra credit for that. When I was in college it was, like, every month. I couldn't even keep track. She'll get over it. We all do.

LYNNE:

How?

JANE:

What choice to we have? Look around you, this place is full of rapists: rapists at the counter, drinking coffee, eating baked goods, goddamnit. *(gesturing outside)* The street is teeming with them—a couple I recognize, as a matter of fact. I mean, stop acting like you've never been raped!

Pause.

LYNNE:

I haven't.

REBECCA:

What?

LYNNE:

I've never been raped.

JANE:

Never? Ever? You're serious?

LYNNE:

Yes.

REBECCA:

My god.

JANE:

I would never have guessed. Man. You do live in another world!

REBECCA:

You've never been raped. Not once. How can that be?

LYNNE:

I don't know.

JANE:

But you've had sex.

LYNNE:

Of course. Consensual sex.

REBECCA:

That's still possible?

JANE:

(to Lynne) Oh, I'm sorry to say it, sweetheart. But you're due.

LYNNE:

Why am I due?

REBECCA:

What's it like? I don't even remember.

JANE:

(to Lynne) And at this age, the first time's just going to be all that much harder for you! You should not have put it off this long. That's crazy.

REBECCA:

Real sex. That you want to have.

LYNNE:

(to Jane) Put it off? What are you talking about?

JANE:

Rape's one of those things you just have to get out of the way. It gets easier.

LYNNE:

But why should it get easier? Why should it even happen? Look at her. For the third time.

REBECCA:

This year.

LYNNE:

She doesn't look like she's had it easy. She looks like she's had enough. More than enough. She looks like she's... broken.

REBECCA:

I feel broken. I am broken. There are pieces of me all over this city, behind curtains and in dark corners and on the street in broad daylight and... in my own bed. In my own home. Pieces I don't even recognize. I'm not even sure they're still a part of me. I keep moving and there's less and less of me, this year, each year, every year.

Pause.

JANE:

Well, drink up. That's just the way it is.

LYNNE:

But why?

JANE:

Why?

LYNNE:

What if it didn't have to be that way? What if we lived someplace where rape wasn't "the way it is."

JANE:

In your alternate universe, where rape doesn't exist?

LYNNE:

Or if it does, as long as it does, it should never be easy. Men should not be raised to think that. There should never be an excuse. For anyone.

Perhaps there is a siren, and the women look out through the window.

REBECCA:

Can you imagine?

JANE:

Opening the curtains. Taking them down.

LYNNE:

So everyone sees, everyone knows, everyone has to.

REBECCA:

Never having to worry about the wrong bus, or what happens along the way...

Pause.

JANE:

Huh. Just where might we all end up, then?

The three women, cups in hand, consider—or re-consider—the world, people and transportation options around them

End of Play