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# The Roadkill Café

A One-Act Comedy by  
**Mike Willis**

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# The Roadkill Café

by Mike Willis

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

2W / 3M / 1 Either

**RUBY LYNN:** *The owner of the Roadkill Café. She is thirty-five years old and attractive in a plain down-home way. Ruby is usually smiling and enjoys interacting with her customers. She dresses in jeans and wears a waitress's apron when she is working. Ruby speaks with an easy-going country drawl.*

**GIBBY "GIB":** *A regular customer at the café. Gib is close to seventy years old. He speaks very loudly, not because he is hard of hearing, but because he wants to be heard above everyone else. Gib is a die-hard republican. He served one term in the state house of representatives. Gib wears boots and dresses in old work clothes. He wears either a cowboy hat or an old ball cap with a feed and seed logo on it.*

**BYRON:** *Byron is also a regular customer at the café. He is fifty-five years old and a part-time farmer and businessman. He dresses casually in boots, nice jeans and a button-down shirt. Byron is a die-hard democrat. He is loud and opinionated.*

**REV. WILLY:** *A regular customer at the café, Reverend Willy is sixty and a Methodist minister. He is very passionate regarding his faith, but he is not pushy. Willy wears dark slacks and a dark button-down shirt.*

**MISS JULIE:** *A life-long regular at the café, Miss Julie is either seventy or eighty and is spry and sharp for her age. She is cheap and dresses in mismatched clothes. Julie is caustic and loves to irritate people. She is fond of ruby.*

**CECILE/CECIL ("COOKIE"):** *Male or Female; the cook at the café. In her forties, CECILE is very loyal to Ruby Lynn and the Roadkill Café. She wears a stocking hat and a stained apron.*

## TIME

*Early morning, the present*

## SETTING

*A run-down café in a small town well off the beaten path.*

## **DIRECTOR'S NOTE**

The play can be easily performed on a bare-stage with furniture props. The old sad country song in the opening can be changed to one that is in the public domain. Casting is somewhat gender flexible with minimal line changes. Some examples: Cecile can be changed to Cecil and REV. Willy to Rev. Lilly. Timing can be critical to the humor especially with the overlapping of lines.

## **HISTORY**

The Roadkill Café, was selected as one of the winners of the Village Playhouse of Wauwatosa's 34<sup>th</sup> Annual One-Act Playwriting Festival. As one of the selected winners, the play received a fully-staged performance at Inspiration Studios in West Allis, Wisconsin. The play was directed by Edson Melendez and ran throughout the month of June, 2019 with the following cast:

*RUBY LYNN*..... JOANNA LANGWORTHY

*MISS JULIE*..... LILY SULLIVAN

*CECIL, "COOKIE"*..... SCOTT SORENSEN

*BYRON*..... PAUL WEIR

*GIBBY "GIB"* ..... SCOTT STENSTRUP

*REVEREND WILLY*.....ART CARTER

The play was produced by Tom Zuelke and Erico Ortiz with light and sound design by Elizabeth Havicam and set design by Joe Ferrie and Casey Paszkiewicz.

## The Roadkill Café

by Mike Willis

**SETTING:** *The setting is an old café that has obviously seen better days. Three old mismatched tables with equally mismatched chairs are on stage. The largest table is round and set up center-stage with three or more chairs. There are two smaller tables, one down-stage left and another down-stage right. The tables are covered with mismatched checkered tablecloths. Up stage right of center is the entrance to the café with a chalkboard on an easel reading “Please Seat Yerself” and Today’s Special 1/3 lb. Possum Burger w/Fries \$5.95. There is a counter up stage-left that has a pass-thru window to off-stage. The kitchen is located off-stage thru this window. There is a phone on the counter along with a coffee maker and stacks of coffee cups. The daily newspaper is also on the counter. The walls are covered with old wallpapaer and or old posters and memorabilia.*

**AT RISE:** *RUBY, an attractive but plain woman in her thirties, is standing by the counter arranging silverware in paper napkins. She wears an apron with her pad for taking orders in the apron pocket. SFX: Hank Williams Sr.’s song, “I’m So Lonesome I could Cry” (or some other old, sad country song) is playing softly in the background. RUBY, hums along to the music as an elderly woman, JULIE, enters in a hurry from outside. She is a little hunched over and wears clothes she most likely has had for years. Moving quite spryly for her age, JULIE crosses quickly to the counter and snatches up the newspaper.*

Mornin’, Miss Julie.

RUBY

Is it? Hmmmph.

JULIE

Is it what, Miss Julie?

RUBY

JULIE

What?! Why, a good mornin', girl?

RUBY

*(Kidding)*

Now, I never said "good" mornin', Miss Julie. I just said mornin'.

JULIE

Ruby Lynn....

RUBY

One can never tell... 'till it gets to be the afternoon that is, if it was a *good* mornin' or not.

JULIE

Ruby Lynn Sawyer, I'd appreciate it if you'd just bring me my usual and spare me your philosophies regardin' mornin's.

RUBY

*(Playing with JULIE)*

And what might the usual be?

JULIE

You know perfectly well what my usual is. I been comin' in here at 6 AM every day since your daddy brought you in here wearin' underpants with three corners on 'em... and I always order the same thing...

JULIE and RUBY

*(Together)*

Regular coffee with three creams and one sugar.

JULIE

You got it. And I want real sugar too, not any of that fake crap.

*RUBY crosses to the counter and JULIE crosses to table DR.*

RUBY

Comin' right up.

JULIE

And don't forget, that's a *senior* coffee. I want to be sure I get my senior discount.

RUBY

*(From the counter)*

I'll need to see some ID.

JULIE

Hmmmp, funny girl. I'm wearin' my ID right here on my face.

*RUBY hums to the music while pouring coffee into a cup. She adds the cream and sugar and crosses to JULIE who has begun to look at the newspaper.*

RUBY

*(Placing the coffee on the table)*

Here ya are Miss Julie, one *senior* regular coffee with three creams and one *real* sugar.... and no fake crap.

JULIE

Fine, thank you. Now, go away so I can read my paper. And for God's sakes turn that pitiful music off, it's depressing. It puts me in a bad mood.

RUBY

*(Calling towards the kitchen)*

Cecile, turn the music off!

CECILE, *Off*

*(From the kitchen)*

What for? This is a classic. No, don't tell me. Miss Julie is coming.

JULIE

*(Calling loudly)*

Already here, Cookie. *(Music stops)* Thank you.

CECILE, *Off*

*(Muted)*

Dang. I love that song.

RUBY

Where are your glasses, Miss Julie?

JULIE

My glasses?

RUBY

For readin' the paper. Unless you have benefitted from some recent miracle, you can't read anything without your glasses.

JULIE

What if I told you I had that there Latex surgery?

RUBY

Lasiks? Nope, ain't buyin' it.

JULIE

How about if I told you I forgot my glasses, but I grabbed the newspaper anyway to keep the three stooges from gettin' it?

RUBY

Now, that right there, I believe. I take it yer talkin' about Gib, Byron and Willy?

JULIE

Right, the stooges. Ya got Gibby your Republican, Byron your Democrat and Willy your man of the cloth... sounds like a bad joke, don't it? A Republican, a Democrat and a Preacher walk into a bar—

RUBY

— Or café —

JULIE

—Or, café... where they sit at the same table every day, with the daily newspaper, arguing over whatever BS happens to be in it that day. And as if that isn't bad enough, if they can't find anything in the paper to argue about, they start makin' up *fake* news of their own.

RUBY

They do have their opinions.

JULIE

And they ain't shy about sharin' 'em. They're idiots.

RUBY

They're customers.

JULIE

Customers! Customers, who sit here all morning drinkin' seventy-five cent senior coffees with free refills. Where do they think they are, McDonalds?

RUBY

*(Tapping JULIE'S cup)*

Miss Julie...

JULIE

What? *(Realizing that senior coffee is all she ordered)* Ruby Lynn, you know perfectly well I come in every Sunday for your squirrel pot pie.

RUBY

Yes, you do, and I appreciate it.

JULIE

You should. Now, go away so I can read my paper.

RUBY

*(Chuckling)*

Read? Really?

JULIE

Oh, don't worry, I'll give the old coots the paper after I make them stew a bit. If I'm going to have to listen to 'em, I want to at least have a little fun of my own first.

*RUBY crosses to the counter to continue folding napkins. JULIE sips her coffee and stares at the newspaper as CECILE enters from the kitchen. She crosses to the counter and fills a cup with coffee. CECILE is in her forties and wears a stained apron and stocking hat. She takes her coffee and crosses to JULIE.*

CECILE

Good mornin', Miss Julie.

JULIE

Bite me, Cookie.

CECILE

What!?

JULIE

I've been informed by your boss that you can't tell if it's been a *good* mornin' until it is actually the afternoon. So, don't go wishin' me a good mornin' until this afternoon.

CECILE

But you won't be comin' in this afternoon, you only....

JULIE

Lucky me. Now, bug off and go do whatever it is that you do.

CECILE

Now, I know ya'll know I'm just the lowly cook.

JULIE

Well then, ya better start cookin' up some more coffee before the *irregulars* get here.

CECILE

Huh?

RUBY

*(To CECILE)*

She's talkin' about Gib, Byron and Willy. You sit and drink your coffee, Cecile. I think we have enough for now.

JULIE

Don't bet on it.

RUBY

And... if we get low, I'll start a new pot brewin'.

*CECILE sits at the table down-stage left drinking her coffee. Loud voices can be heard from outside. Hearing the commotion, RUBY automatically begins filling three coffee cups.*

GIB, *Off*

*(Very loudly)*

I'm tellin' ya, the whole thing is asinine. If you Demo "Rats" had your way we'd all be smokin' pot and drivin' around in eclectic cars.

BYRON, *Off*

Electric! They're electric cars! Not eclectic, you dumb Republican.

GIB, *Off*

Who you callin' dumb you commie liberal? I'll have you know I served in our state House of Representatives.

*GIB enters followed by BYRON. BOTH are very loud. GIB is in his seventies and BYRON is in his fifties. GIB is dressed in old work clothes and wears a cowboy hat or feed and seed ballcap. BYRON is dressed in casual clothes. THEY cross towards the counter.*

For one term.

BYRON

Don't matter, I was duly elected.

GIB

You ran unopposed!

BYRON

There were write-ins.

GIB

Yeah, for about two hundred other people.

BYRON

*RUBY hands a cup of coffee to GIB and one to BYRON.*

GIB and BYRON

(Together)

Mornin', Ruby.

Gib. Byron.

RUBY

Ruby, what do you think about electric cars?

BYRON

Hmmm... I think they run on electricity.

RUBY

(Laughing)

Good one, Ruby. Where's today's paper?

GIB

*RUBY points to JULIE.*

GIB

*(Looking over at JULIE)*

Oh, crap.

BYRON

I'll second that.

GIB

Well, lookit you, a Democrat seconding a dumb Republican.

BYRON

Only on this one issue.

*BYRON crosses to the center table and sits. GIB crosses to JULIE.*

GIB

*(To JULIE)*

Mind if Byron and I look at the paper, Miss Julie?

JULIE

Not at all, look at it all you want... from over there. *(Points to BYRON at the center table)*  
You can have it when I'm finished.

GIB

Well, how 'bout the sports section? Surely, you ain't...

JULIE

Finished with it? Nope, still readin' it. *(Looking at paper)* Well looky here, the score of last night's game was eighty-six to seventy-two.

GIB

Really, who won?

JULIE

Why, the team that was eighty-six, you fool! *(RUBY and CECILE choke on their coffee)*  
Now, go sit and enjoy your senile coffee and I'll get you the paper when I'm finished.

*GIB crosses to the center table.*

GIB

*(As crossing)*

It's senior coffee, not senile coffee.

JULIE

Oh, did I say senile? Must have been a Floridian slip.

*GIB sits at the table with BYRON.*

BYRON

Where's the newspaper?

GIB

Miss Julie ain't finished with it.

BYRON

Damn, I was wondering who won the big game last night.

GIB

Eighty-six did.

BYRON

*(Laughing)*

Yeah, I heard that part. Ya got to admit, that was a good one.

GIB

Hardy, har, har. Maybe you can use some of your liberal charm to liberate it from her.

BYRON

I think I'll table that motion. Where's Reverend Willy? He's usually here by now.

GIB

Probably out healin' the sick or walkin' across someone's swimmin' pool.

BYRON

Now Gibby, that's just not right. You know Willy takes his faith seriously. Just as serious as you take bein' a Republican.

GIB

Look who's talkin'. You probably kneel down each night and say a prayer to Clinton.

BYRON

Well if I do, it's just to cancel out your prayers to "*The Donald*".

*SFX: The phone rings. RUBY answers it;  
The OTHERS listen in.*

RUBY

*(Into phone)*

Roadkill Café, you kill it, we grill it. *(Listening and smiling)* Oh, hi Felix, what can I do ya for? *(Pause)* Just a sec, let me ask Cecile. *(Calling to CECILE)* Hey Cecile, ya got that chicken crossin' the road breakfast platter for Felix ready to go?

CECILE

Yep, I got it sittin' on the warmin' tray. Thought he'd be by to pick it up by now.

RUBY

Bubba called in sick this mornin' so he doesn't have anyone to watch the station while he comes over to get it. I'll just run it on over to him, if ya think you can handle things here while I'm gone.

CECILE

*(Looking at JULIE, GIB and BYRON)*

Pretty sure I'll be able to manage pourin' three coffees.

RUBY

Willy should be showin' up pretty soon.

CECILE

Make that four coffees then. Got it covered... you go on ahead, I'll take care of these big-spenders.

RUBY

*(Smiling)*

Thanks, Cecile. *(Flirting with FELIX on the phone)* Hey Felix, hows about I just run that there breakfast platter on over there to ya at the fillin' station myself? What ya think of that? *(Pause)* Why, no trouble at all... but, you just know I'll be expectin' a *big* tip. *(Pause)* Oooh, I'll be right over. *(To CECILE)* Thanks Cecile, I won't be long.

CECILE

Don't rush.

RUBY

Exactly what I plan on tellin' Felix.

*CECILE laughs while RUBY exits into the kitchen.*

JULIE

*(To CECILE)*

What's so funny?

CECILE

*(Acting dumb)*

Nothin'.

JULIE

Nothin' my... Somethin' goin' on between Ruby and Felix?

CECILE

Only the delivery of one chicken crossin' the road breakfast platter far as I know.

*CECILE takes her cup and crosses to the counter.*

JULIE

Yeah, right.

GIB

Felix's momma was a Republican.

BYRON

How do you know that?

GIB

'Cause she went to the Episcopal church and everyone knows, those Pisscopalians vote Republican.

BYRON

No one knows that! *(To JULIE and CECILE)* Julie, Cecile, did ya'll know that if you were an Episcopalian you were also a Republican?

CECILE

News to me.

JULIE

Who gives a rat's...

*REVEREND WILLY enters, stopping JULIE in mid-sentence. WILLY is wearing dark jeans, a dark shirt, but no clerical collar. He is somewhere between forty and sixty.*

JULIE, *Continued*

Uh...behind. *(Muttering)* Yep, uh, I'm a little behind, that's all, uh...

Mornin' Reverend Willy.

CECILE

Cecile. I'll have...

WILLY

One senior decaf, comin' right up.

CECILE

That's right, thanks.

WILLY

*WILLY crosses to the table with BYRON and GIB as CECILE pours a cup of coffee for WILLY.*

We need to get us a professional opinion. Reverend Willy, do you think all Episcopalians are Republicans?

BYRON

Well, I...

WILLY

The Bushes were Episcopalians.

GIB

Jack Kennedy was a Catholic, does that mean all Catholics are Democrats?

BYRON

Must be, otherwise Kennedy never would have got hisself elected.

GIB

*CECILE crosses to WILLY with coffee.*

Why would Reverend Willy know anything about the Episcopalians, he's a Methodist. Ain't that right Willy?

CECILE

Uh, that's right Cecile.

WILLY

*(Giving CECILE a dirty look, not wanting to get involved)*

*CECILE heads back to the counter smiling.*

CECILE

Thought so.

BYRON

Then that makes you a Democrat, right Willy?

GIB

No, it doesn't! That makes him a Republican. General Ulysses S. Grant was a Methodist and he was a Republican.

BYRON

Well James Polk was a Methodist and he was a Democrat.

GIB

McKinley was Methodist and he was Republican... so, Methodist Republicans win two to one.

BYRON

Do not! (*To WILLY*) Reverend Willy, you need to settle this... as a Methodist, what party do you favor?

WILLY

*(Stalling)*

Well, uh... I'd have to say that my party is, uh... the Party of The Lord.

GIB

The Party of The Lord? That ain't no party.

WILLY

Well, I will admit it has gotten a lot smaller as of late.

CECILE

*(Encouraging the argument from the counter)*

Felix's daddy was a Baptist.

BYRON

Then he was a Democrat. All Baptists are Democrats.

CECILE

What do ya know, a Baptist Democrat and an Episcopalian Republican livin' together, a house divided...

GIB

Shall soon fall.

CECILE

*(Chuckling)*

Felix's parents were married over fifty years. I expect they would have broken it off sooner or later 'cause of their political differences... if they hadn't both up and died, don'tcha think?

JULIE

*(Chuckling)*

A real shame. *(Handing a portion of the paper to GIB)* Here's the sport's section and the obituaries. Check to make sure ya ain't in there... ya didn't look so good yesterday.

*GIB takes the paper and opens it to the obituary section.*

GIB

Hmmph, Fred died.

BYRON

Who's Fred?

GIB

You know Fred.

BYRON

No, I don't know any Fred.

WILLY

That the Fred who used to work over to the cheese factory, stirrin' whey?

GIB

No, that's another Fred. This Fred never stirred any whey, this Fred was married to Wilma who worked over at the Dollar General.

CECILE

*(Teasing)*

I know him. That's the guy they used to call Wilma's husband.

*JULIE and CECILE share a laugh.*

GIB

Right, that's him. I think he was a Republican. Most cheese factory workers are Republicans.

JULIE

I thought you said he didn't work at the cheese factory.

GIB

*(Caught with a hitch in his story)*

Well... well, he might have worked there at one time. Anyway, don't matter where he worked, he was a Republican.

BYRON

Next I suppose you're gonna say he was an Episcopalian too?

GIB

Probably.

WILLY

I know some Episcopalians, but I don't know any named Fred.

BYRON

Don't matter, forget Fred. Who won the game last night?

GIB

*(Looking in paper)*

We did. We won big too, you'll never guess what the score was?

CECILE and JULIE

*(Together)*

Eighty-six to seventy-two.

GIB

That's right. How'd you... *(Realizing)* Oohh....

WILLY

How'd this Fred, die?

GIB

*(Looking at the newspaper)*

Don't say. I didn't know he was sick, must have been kinda sudden.

BYRON

How old was he?

GIB

*(Checking the paper)*

Ninety-eight.

CECILE

Sounds sudden all right... only took a century for it to happen.

GIB

Don't be so cocky, you're gonna be old someday. Why aren't you in the kitchen anyway?

CECILE

I need to be out here tendin' to your every wish 'till Ruby gets back.

BYRON

Thought she'd be back by now. How long's it take to run something right across the street anyhow?

CECILE

She and Felix had some business to take care of. (*Crosses with coffee pot*) You guys ready for a *free* refill yet?

GIB

What kind of *bizness* can Ruby have with some pump jockey at a fillin' station?

JULIE

Personal business.

GIB

What kind of personal bizness?

CECILE

*Real, personal bizness.*

WILLY

(*Grasping the meaning*)

Oh, that. Never mind, you don't want to know, Gib.

GIB

Yes, I do.

BYRON

No, you don't.

GIB

An owner's place is at their bizness, tendin' to the needs of their customers... not runnin' all over the dang place.

CECILE

I'm sure she's doing some needs tendin' right now. Here... have some more coffee.

*CECILE fills EVERYONE'S coffee cups.*

GIB

I'm just sayin' a lot of biznesses go under because the owners ain't around.

CECILE

*(Crossing back to the counter)*

If the Roadkill goes out of business, it won't be because Ruby spends a little time with Felix.

BYRON

What do ya mean, if the Roadkill goes out of business?

CECILE

I started here when I was sixteen, some thirty years ago, workin' for Ruby's daddy. You were all comin' in then, you know what business was like.

BYRON

It was boomin'.

WILLY

Hard to find a place to sit.

JULIE

I remember those days. That was back before they built the new interstate and the village got bypassed.

CECILE

Now look at it. On most days, the four of you are the only customers in the door before eleven o'clock. And what do you order, four senior coffees for a grand total of three dollars. On top of that, she insists on paying me to be here. I told her she should think about changin' her hours or sellin'.

GIB

She can't sell.

BYRON

Sure, she can. The Roadkill is hers to do with what she wants.

JULIE

But, where would we go for coffee?

GIB

Or to read the paper... for free?

WILLY

If you told her she should sell, why don't she?

CECILE

‘Cause, she loves this place, it’s her life. And, she loves you guys. Don’t ask me why, ‘cause you all can be a major pain in the aa... (*Remembers REV. WILLY*) ...uh, neck.

WILLY

I knew what you were gonna say, Cecile. I heard it before.

CECILE

Sorry.

WILLY

Nah, it’s all right. I expect on most days we are a pain in the... uh, buttocks.

GIB

Speak for yerself.

JULIE

Not sure what we can do to help, I ain’t got much money.

BYRON

Me neither, the Republicans have all the money.

GIB

I ain’t got no money.

BYRON

Then how come you’re a Republican?

GIB

Because... because, well, just ‘cause I am!

BYRON

*(Sarcastic)*

Now, that there’s a good reason.

WILLY

I’ve given all my money to the church.

JULIE

Halleluiaah!

CECILE

Ruby wouldn’t take money from ya’ll even if ya had it. Business just needs to pick up a bit, to make things a might easier for her.

BYRON

Well, that's not likely to happen.

CECILE

Might, if this new interchange off the interstate goes through. At least that's what Ruby thinks.

GIB

What interchange?

BYRON

Yeah, what interchange?

CECILE

You mean to tell me that the four of you come in here every mornin' to read the *free* paper and none of you have ever read about the proposed off-ramp to the village?

GIB

I refuse to read the State News Section, that's written by Democrats.

BYRON

I never get to read the State Section, 'cause our resident Republican here (*Pointing at GIB*) hides it.

JULIE

I don't read any of it.

GIB

Any of what?

JULIE

The newspaper. I don't read any of it.

GIB

What do ya mean ya don't read any of it? You were readin' it this morning.

JULIE

Was not. I couldn't see it. I didn't have my readin' glasses on. I only saw the score of the game because the print was so big.

GIB

What?!

Then why did you take the paper?  
BYRON

(Smiling)  
It's a game I like to play.  
JULIE

That's just mean.  
GIB

Oh, get over it. I always give you the paper eventually.  
JULIE

She's right, she does.  
WILLY

Never mind who reads what, let's just pray the state legislature approves the Transportation Department's budget and that interchange goes through and business picks up.  
CECILE

I'll do that right now.  
WILLY

WILLY bows his head, folds his hands  
and closes his eyes.

(Looking at WILLY)  
I don't believe it. That isn't going to help.  
GIB

Can't hurt.  
BYRON

*RUBY enters from the kitchen all smiles  
and crosses center-stage.*

Hey, ya'll. What's up?  
RUBY

That's what we should be askin' you.  
JULIE

What?  
RUBY

JULIE

Never mind, Dearie. How's Felix these days?

RUBY

*(Smiling)*

Oh, he's just fine.

JULIE

I just bet he is. He like his breakfast?

RUBY

Loved it.

*RUBY sees WILLY who still has his head bowed and hands folded.*

RUBY, *Continued*

What's Reverend Willy doin'?

BYRON

He's prayin'

RUBY

How come?

GIB

It's what he does.

*RUBY crosses to REVEREND WILLY and shakes him.*

RUBY

Reverend Willy, you okay?

WILLY

Yep, just prayin' is all.

RUBY

Any special reason you're doin' it here in the Roadkill?

WILLY

Prayin' can be done anywhere.

RUBY

Well, I guess you're right about that.

CECILE

Willy's prayin' that the legislature will approve the transportation budget and the village will get that new off-ramp.

RUBY

Is that right, Willy? You prayin' we get that new interchange?

**This is Not the End of the Play**  
**Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes**