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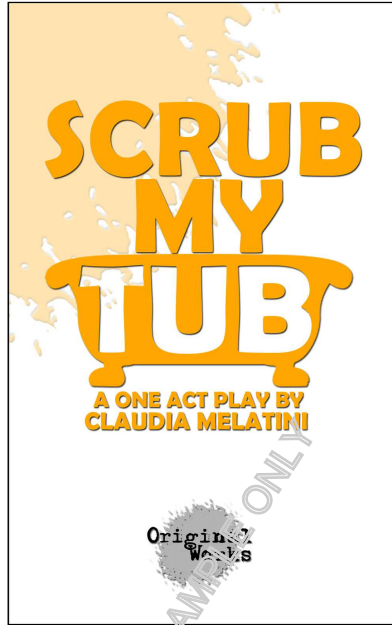
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THE WAY IT IS
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SCRUB MY TUB by Claudia Melatini

Synopsis: Gary has a particular way he likes his apartment cleaned and his regular maid is unavailable. Aretha's just about mopped her last floor. Find out what happens when an anal retentive man and a burnt-out maid come to blows over dusting styles, chivalry, and Japanese dining etiquette.

Cast Size: 1 Male, 1 Female

THE WAY IT IS
By Donna Hoke

SAMPLE ONLY

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

YASMINE: Early to late thirties, any ethnicity. Yasmine is everywoman; she should be lovable and not harsh, i.e. don't cast someone who normally plays tough girls, or you'll end up with the wrong play.

CANE: Yasmine's ex-boyfriend, early to late thirties, any ethnicity. A decent, if a tad insensitive, guy carrying a lot of guilt.

SETTING: Now, in real time, in Yasmine's apartment, which she formerly shared with Cane.

NOTE: This play is in real time, and therefore must be performed without intermission.

The first production of THE WAY IT IS was presented in 2016 by DUCKFACE at London's Hens and Chickens Theatre. It was directed by Emily Wyatt and the cast was as follows:

Yasmine: Jeśka Pike

Cane: Nicholas Campbell

SAMPLE ONLY

THE WAY IT IS

(At rise, an apartment, nicely appointed and comfortable, a young couple's first place together that began with hand-me-downs and gradually became their own as their salaries and time together increased. Some bare spots are notable, as though furniture has been removed. A single photo of Yasmine and Cane is on a table or wall. The couch is front and center, with a sofa table behind it that cannot be seen by the audience but is evidenced by a vase of dried roses visible above the sofa.)

(YASMINE finishes tidying the apartment. Pulls a man's shirt from the closet and tosses it casually on a chair, then arranges it ever so slightly. She pulls a bottle of wine from a rack and sets it on the coffee table, reaches for two glasses from a cabinet, puts them on the coffee table, then changes her mind, puts them back in the cabinet, and moves the wine to a less conspicuous location.)

(She looks around, spies the side table with drawer, checks the drawer; it's open. She takes a key from its hiding place, locks the drawer, replaces the key. She checks herself in the mirror, primping; she has worked to look her best and is satisfied with her simple T-shirt and skirt. She tries to look sexy, she tries to look casual, she tries to look disinterested—until she hears the sound of a key in the door. She whirls around. CANE enters.)

YASMINE: Breaking and entering? Mrs. Edson's probably got the cops on the line right now.

CANE: (*checks watch*) Nope. *Wheel of Fortune*.

YASMINE: I can call the cops myself.

CANE: This isn't going to be that kind of visit.

YASMINE: I mean the real cops. But if that's what you have in—

CANE: (*holding it up*) Key.

YASMINE: You were supposed to give that back.

CANE: My word against yours. And I'm using a key.

YASMINE: But I didn't say you could enter.

CANE: But you did say you weren't going to be here.

YASMINE: I changed my mind.

CANE: Why?

YASMINE: We're not strangers, Cane. Avoiding each other is silly. And I... I wanted to see you.

CANE: So you're doing okay? You look like you're doing okay.

YASMINE: I thought you'd knock. Using a key makes it seem like you still live here.

CANE: I'll make this quick. And I'll give it back to you.

YASMINE: You don't have to.

CANE: Give it back?

YASMINE: Rush.

CANE: Does that mean you're letting me enter?

YASMINE: You're in, aren't you?

CANE: *(looking around)* It looks exactly the same.

YASMINE: You thought I'd redecorate? In all black, maybe?

CANE: No, I just thought... it's just so familiar. I don't know. ...So where is it?

YASMINE: Where's what?

CANE: My stuff.

YASMINE: What stuff?

CANE: The stuff you wanted me to pick up. You were gonna have it ready.

YASMINE: Right. There's a box in the bedroom.

(She moves to go. He doesn't follow, so she turns back. Beat.)

CANE: Are you gonna get it?

YASMINE: I haven't seen you in months. You're just gonna grab your box and leave like you're picking up dry cleaning with the car running?

CANE: I'm sorry. I thought you'd want me out of here.

YASMINE: If I remember correctly, you're the one who wanted out.

CANE: See, that's exactly where I don't want to go, so if you could please—

YASMINE: You're in a hurry.

CANE: I just want my stuff. (*indicating shirt on chair*) Is this my shirt?

YASMINE: (*laughs*) I like the beard. It makes you look distinguished.

CANE: So everybody says. What does that even mean?

YASMINE: That you've successfully drawn attention from your receding hairline.

(*They laugh. She appraises him.*)

YASMINE: You look nice. You have somewhere to be.

CANE: I have plans, yes.

YASMINE: Plans. Does she know you're stopping here?

CANE: I'm not talking about her with you.

YASMINE: So she doesn't know.

CANE: ...

YASMINE: Ha. Like I'm a threat to her. Or maybe... maybe you thought... I'd better make sure I'm doing the right thing. Last chance. Maybe I'll put on Yasmine's favorite sweater and let fate decide. You know what the sweater does to me, Cane. So either you're wearing it to twist the knife, or you wanted—

CANE: Nothing. I wanted nothing. I like this sweater, too.

YASMINE: And just happened to forget that every time you put it on, we were twenty minutes late because I couldn't resist—

CANE: Yes, I forgot.

YASMINE: Forgot it was your “blow me” sweater.

CANE: Like you said, it's been months. Come on Yasmine, where's my—

YASMINE: I'll do it if you want. For old time's sake. You pick the game. The cop, the zookeeper—

CANE: Jesus, Yaz. Stop it.

YASMINE: You called me Yaz. You're thinking about it.

CANE: Old habit.

YASMINE: Like the sweater? But still... *(she moves closer)* It's not a bad idea. *(closer)* Is it?

CANE: *(ever so slightly responsive, despite himself)* Just get my stuff.

(Satisfied that she has gotten to him—even a little—YASMINE goes into another room, comes back with a medium-sized box. While she's gone, CANE picks up the shirt, tries to decide if it's his—and can't.)

YASMINE: Here.

(She drops the box on the chair or couch.)

CANE: I left that much stuff here?

YASMINE: One could say you wanted an excuse to come back.

CANE: One shouldn't assume I wanted anything more than to pack quickly.

YASMINE: Couldn't wait to get out.

CANE: Didn't want to make things anymore painful for you.

YASMINE: Do you mean that?

CANE: Of course.

(CANE opens the box.)

CANE: My Christmas ornaments. I forgot about those.

YASMINE: You would have remembered at Christmas.

CANE: If I got a tree.

YASMINE: (*suspicious*) Why wouldn't you get a tree?

CANE: I guess no reason.

YASMINE: Maybe you don't want to remember all the fun we had getting our trees. Or all the fun we had under the trees.

CANE: You were always more into Christmas than I was.

YASMINE: That's not true. You were just more into me. (*beat*) I kept the little snow globe from Aspen.

CANE: That's okay. You're the one who really loved it.

YASMINE: Because it was our first vacation. We didn't even ski.

CANE: Keep it. My [local university] shirt! Where'd you find it?

YASMINE: Under the bed.

CANE: Under— How did it get— Oh, when we used it for...

YASMINE: Yeah. Don't you miss nights like—

CANE: You're giving me our wedding toast glasses?

YASMINE: What am I going to do with them?

CANE: They're crystal. Use them.

YASMINE: What, like on a date? They're jinxed.

CANE: Well I can't use them either.

YASMINE: Sure, you can. "Darling, these were supposed to be my wedding toast glasses, but why let virgin crystal go to waste? Let's toast to out with the old, in with the new."

CANE: (*winces*) How about you donate them?

YASMINE: (*already moving toward wine*) How about we use them now?

CANE: That's probably not a good—

YASMINE: (*retrieving wine and a corkscrew*) Come on. We're grown-ups. It seems right. Closure.

(*CANE checks his watch.*)

YASMINE: You are in a hurry.

CANE: One glass.

(*CANE sits.*)

YASMINE: (*opening, pouring*) This bottle is the last of our engagement party wine. Also fitting. What do we toast to? Fidelity?

CANE: (*getting up*) I don't know why I thought we could—

YASMINE: No, no, no, no, no, we can. Come on, come on. That just slipped out. Sit.

(CANE sits. YASMINE sits.)

YASMINE: To friendship. And eight good years. They were good, right, until...

CANE: Yeah.

(CANE and YASMINE toast in silent acknowledgment.)

YASMINE: And the sex wasn't just good, it was great, right?

CANE: ...Yeah. Yeah, it was.

YASMINE: Fucking fantastic.

CANE: Yeah, but sex isn't—

YASMINE: Which was your favorite?

CANE: I don't want to talk about this.

YASMINE: Just tell me. The teacher, the zookeeper, Dr. Love Machine—

(Cane smiles despite himself. Yasmine smiles because she got him to smile.)

CANE: Cops. Cops was my favorite.

YASMINE: I knew it. Me too.

(They smile at a memory and YASMINE tries to figure out how it all went wrong.)

YASMINE: Would it have made a difference if I changed my mind about the puppy?

CANE: What? No. Did you?

YASMINE: You never really got over that.

CANE: It has nothing to do with the puppy.

YASMINE: It wasn't even our puppy.

CANE: That was never the point.

YASMINE: And it really was kind of an unfair question, me being a vegetarian and everything. You know I have the utmost respect for Shakespeare.

CANE: You're a writer. How can you not? The fact that his work exists—still exists—is mind-boggling.

YASMINE: But isn't life just as much, if not more, mind-boggling?

CANE: We don't have to get into it again.

YASMINE: Life has to come first. Without life, there would be no art.

CANE: Puppies don't create art.

YASMINE: You're just not much of an animal lover, then. Neutral, I'd say, is what you are. ...So what if it was a baby?

CANE: It was never supposed to be— It was just for fun. I just didn't expect—

YASMINE: My answer to be different from yours?

CANE: No matter what your answer was, we still wouldn't—

YASMINE: So right now, today, would you choose to rescue from fire, terrorism, and imminent and certain destruction the world's only surviving copy of the complete works of Shakespeare not over a single puppy, but over a single baby?

CANE: I don't know.

YASMINE: But probably the Shakespeare?

CANE: I don't know. Probably.

YASMINE: Because he's such a fucking genius.

CANE: It's about the history, the... it's like the Taj Mahal of literature.

YASMINE: What if it was your baby?

(CANE downs the rest of his wine, makes a face because who downs wine? But he wants out.)

YASMINE: What if it was your baby with her?

(CANE gets up.)

CANE: This isn't a good idea.

(CANE starts rummaging through the box. YASMINE pursues, with her glass.)

YASMINE: “I do desire we may be better strangers.”

CANE: What?

YASMINE: You don’t even recognize the Bard when you hear him? And yet somehow my whole future depended on my answer.

CANE: It didn’t. And you have a lot of future left.

YASMINE: Without you.

CANE: *(beat)* But not alone, Yaz, I promise.

YASMINE: You can’t promise. Lots of women end up alone.

CANE: But they’re not you.

YASMINE: I can be alone. I just don’t want to be unloved. If I had a baby, I wouldn’t be unloved. And I sure as hell wouldn’t sacrifice it for Shakespeare.

CANE: Hey, you’re not unloved. You’re not. What happened with us does not define your whole life.

YASMINE: But we were my whole life.

CANE: Just a part of it, honey.

YASMINE: Honey?

CANE: ...

YASMINE: Is she honey, too, or something more special? Sweetcakes or Dew Drop, maybe.

CANE: Seriously, Yasmine, just a part. A blip, really, when you look at the big picture, the eighty years picture. It's like one tenth. A dime. Nothing. Someday, you won't even notice it.

YASMINE: Eight years is a blip to you?

CANE: A big blip maybe, but yeah, a blip.

YASMINE: At our age, it's not. It's an investment. This might just be a crash and you bailed out right when the market's about to surge. You don't know.

CANE: Yes. I do. I do know.

(CANE does one big final search through the box.)

CANE: Where is it?

YASMINE: Where's what?

CANE: You know what, my mother's ring. You said you were ready to give it back. I don't care about any of this shit.

YASMINE: *(setting down her wine glass, as if to look in the box herself)* It's not in there?

CANE: You know damn well it isn't.

YASMINE: Don't get testy.

CANE: I want the ring.

YASMINE: How bad do you want it?

CANE: You want me to beg for it?

YASMINE: No, I want you to find it. Treasure hunt!

CANE: No treasure hunt. Just give it to me.

YASMINE: You love a good hunt. It's fun.

CANE: I don't have time.

(YASMINE shrugs. CANE halfheartedly looks in one place.)

YASMINE: Cold, cold, cold.

(Spurred by the challenge, CANE searches a little harder like someone who has lived there and knows the hiding places. Ad-lib comments, especially when he goes offstage to bedroom/bathroom/kitchen e.g. "I'll find it," "You think I won't?", "You think I don't know you?" etc., even specifics based on set design.)

(YASMINE is amused throughout, teases him with "Cold," "So cold," "Fucking Siberia." It's a familiar game, and there is evidence, even in his frustration, that he once enjoyed it very much, might even be enjoying it a little now, if not for the circumstances. CANE emerges from the kitchen with a little flour on his face.)

YASMINE: *(amused)* I guess it wasn't in the canisters.

CANE: Give me a hint.

YASMINE: *(seductively)* It's in very familiar territory. *(YASMINE lowers her eyes, then stares at Cane until he gets it.)*

CANE: Oh my god.

(CANE takes a step toward her.)

YASMINE Warmer.

CANE: *(gesturing toward her)* It's--

YASMINE: Come on. Try to find it. I promise not to come. Well, I promise not to try anyway.

CANE: Just give it to me.

YASMINE: You're no fun anymore. She's sucked all the fun out of you.

CANE: I didn't come here to have fun.

YASMINE: No, you came here for the ring, but if a little fun is the price you have to pay...

CANE: Yasmine—

YASMINE: I told you, it's the sweater. Come on. "Officer, you don't mean you intend to strip search me?"

CANE: I definitely don't intend that.

YASMINE: Good things come to those who seek.

CANE: I can't.

YASMINE: Can't? I know for a fact you can, but I know how much you like it when I beg. Ooh, be that sexy Southern cop--

CANE: I'm not gonna—

YASMINE: “You’ve got some big rough policeman hands... Pretty please be gentle with me.”

(CANE abruptly reaches up her skirt. YASMINE has an intake of breath.)

YASMINE: Hot. Burning hot.

CANE: I don't feel anything.

YASMINE: I do. Don't stop.

(YASMINE attempts to transition to seduction, grabs his crotch.)

YASMINE: *(familiar role playing)* “Now you're looking harder, Officer.”

(CANE removes his hand, backs off.)

CANE : You lied.

YASMINE: You didn't really think I could clench a ring in there all day? Either you haven't learned much about women or you just wanted to do it. ...Do it again.

CANE: Give me the ring, Yasmine.

YASMINE: Miss Manners says I don't have to.

CANE: But you said you would.

YASMINE: Why? So you can give it to her?

CANE: Because it was my mother's, and I want to keep it in the family.

YASMINE: I am your family. I miss them.

CANE: I know. It's—

YASMINE: Julia sent me a birthday card last month. I'd say that's a vote for me. Your own sister hasn't accepted her into the fold.

CANE: She'll come around.

YASMINE: I called, and we had lunch. She called you her ex-brother.

CANE: It doesn't matter. She doesn't have to— It doesn't matter.

YASMINE: Doesn't have to what, Cane?

CANE: I don't care if you and Julia are friends but, maybe, don't you think it's just a way of hanging on?

YASMINE: To you.

CANE: Yeah. Like your novel that's what, like 80,000 pages because you can't leave the characters.

YASMINE: Not can't. Chose not to.

CANE: Same result. You don't let go.

YASMINE: I did. I ended it.

CANE: You did not.

YASMINE: They live happily ever after. You
wanna read it?

CANE: Where is it?

YASMINE: On my laptop. In the bedroom. Come
with me. I'll show you.

CANE: The ring. Where's the ring?

YASMINE: The ring, right. About that...

CANE: No more games.

YASMINE: You used to love games.

CANE: ...

YASMINE: Okay, but there's something we need
to talk about first.

CANE: It's all been said. Let's leave it that way
and move on.

YASMINE: That's what I'm trying to do! *(beat)*
I'm sorry. I'm getting ahead. So I wasn't just
asking about the Shakespeare hypothetically,
you know. I am going to have a baby.

CANE: What the— You know what. That's great.
That's what you always wanted. And if I
couldn't be the one—