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THE MAN IN THE CAN

BY
REBECCA RYLAND

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THE MAN IN THE CAN

By
REBECCA RYLAND

4 F / 2 M

Setting:

Central Park

Characters:

Frat Man

Man in the Can

Three Young Ladies

The Bag Lady

THE MAN IN THE CAN

by Rebecca Ryland

(AT RISE: A large trashcan center with bushes right and park bench left. The hinged lid to the trashcan opens as a young MAN stands, brushing the remains of a sandwich from his clothes and hair. The FRAT MAN enters from stage left.)

FRAT MAN

There you are.

MAN IN CAN

Where else?

FRAT MAN

Nice day for a picnic.

MAN IN CAN

Depends on your point of view. So, how long did it take for you to get a date?

FRAT MAN

Oh, I never had to do this. That new guy from Jersey came up with it. Not bad, huh?

MAN IN CAN

Depends on your point of view.

FRAT MAN

Don't be a wuss. I was put over on the East docks and told I had to get an old lady on a cruise ship to kiss me *bon voyage*. *(Sniffs)* What's that smell?

MAN IN CAN

Pastrami on rye.

FRAT MAN

Very appealing.

MAN IN CAN

Depends on your—

FRAT MAN

Yeah, yeah. Is that a common saying where you come from?

MAN IN CAN

Well, that depends—

FRAT MAN

Say it and I'll trash your face.

MAN IN CAN

Sorry. Sometimes I wonder if it's worth it.

FRAT MAN

What are we talkin' here? It beats getting hazed! Besides it's the best Frat on campus.

MAN IN CAN

My mother never told me there'd be days like this.

FRAT MAN

If you want in, you gotta do it.

MAN IN CAN

If I had any sense I'd have stayed in Kansas.

FRAT MAN

You'll never make it with that attitude.

MAN IN CAN

Attitude? Attitude?! I've been in this godforsaken can four hours and the closest I've come to landing a date was with a pit bull! I've been spat on, cursed at— had half-eaten pastrami sandwiches thrown at me. I've—

FRAT MAN

Shhhh! Someone's coming. You know the rules. Not a word as to why you're here. You're on your own. Ta ta! (*Exits.*)

MAN IN CAN

Thanks.

(*THREE YOUNG LADIES approach, one drinking a bottle of Evian.*)

FIRST YOUNG LADY

I guess I will pick up a copy. It sounds so— so *alternative*.

SECOND YOUNG LADY

I've read it *three* times. I can't get enough of it. The whole concept of genetic memory is overpowering— and so *fashionable*.

THIRD YOUNG LADY

Absolutely so.

(*MAN IN CAN stirs. THE THREE YOUNG LADIES notice and begin to move away.*)

MAN IN CAN

Excuse me, ladies. Ladies! How would you like a chance to earn \$5,000? (*No response, then quickly.*) \$10,000?! \$20?

FIRST YOUNG LADY

He could be for real, you know.

SECOND YOUNG LADY

Yeah, right. What planet are you from?

THIRD YOUNG LADY

It's possible. Some of the craziest people are the *richest*. Perhaps we shouldn't appear too hasty.

SECOND YOUNG LADY

Okay. I'll bite. (*To MAN IN CAN.*) So, what's your game?

MAN IN CAN

You see, my mother is hopelessly ill— dying from a rare form of astro...uh...astroencephilitosis [or something like that] and she desperately needs an expensive, highly controversial, dangerously *alternative*, but fashionable operation that can only be performed in Africa, and—

(*The THREE YOUNG LADIES look at one another and move away.*)

MAN IN CAN CONTINUES

Hear me out! My father is a borderline Bi-polar alcoholic who snatches old ladies purses during blackouts— *his* I mean— and one of those purses contained a winning lottery ticket with the old bag's name on the back and if I can just persuade some kind, sympathetic, compassionate, *beautiful* young woman like any one of you to pretend to be that lady and accompany me to cash it in, my mother could have that expensive, highly controversial but potentially *life-saving* operation that can only be performed in China— that she so desperately needs... (*FIRST YOUNG LADY looks at MAN IN CAN.*) And we can discuss your share of the take over dinner. You know the old saying— "There's a bit of petty larceny in us all."

(*MAN IN CAN smiles as FIRST YOUNG LADY approaches.*)

FIRST YOUNG LADY

(*Slapping MAN IN CAN.*) Why you son of a Purse Snatcher! What makes you think that poor old lady he mugged isn't dying from some rare form of astroencephilitosis herself?!

THIRD YOUNG LADY

Or worse!

SECOND YOUNG LADY

(*Throwing bottle of Evian at Man in Can.*) How dare you accuse us of complicity to commit a crime?!

(The THREE YOUNG LADIES exit.)

MAN IN CAN

Ladies! Ladies! Please! *Please!!*

(BAG LADY pushing a bascart full of belongings appears opposite.)

BAG LADY

Hello!

MAN IN CAN

(Turns, hopeful.) Hell— oh!

BAG LADY

Nice day.

MAN IN CAN

Depends on your point of view.

BAG LADY

Found Fred froze to death behind that bush yesterday.

MAN IN CAN

Sorry I missed it.

BAG LADY

No flies, though. Too cold. That's why he froze. Too cold for flies.

MAN IN CAN

Yeah.

BAG LADY

Or rats.

MAN IN CAN

Rats?!

BAG LADY

Here's some newspaper. Keep you warm tonight when the sun goes down. *(Stuffs papers around MAN IN CAN.)* Nice house.

MAN IN CAN

Stop that!

BAG LADY

Don't want your house. Got my own house. Sleep right there under the bascart. Don't need your house. Don't need to give you papers, either. They're mine anyway.

MAN IN CAN

I don't want your house or anything else you got.

BAG LADY

What's the matter?

MAN IN CAN

Nothing.

BAG LADY

I can tell these things. I can see them. I got special powers. What's the matter?

MAN IN CAN

A headache. That's all.

BAG LADY

(*Thrashing through belongings in bascart and then pulling out an old vile.*) Want some aspirin?

MAN IN CAN

Don't be so helpful.

BAG LADY

You're mad at me.

MAN IN CAN

I'm not mad at you. I'm *nothing* to you. Would you please just leave me alone?

BAG LADY

You *are* mad at me.

MAN IN CAN

Go away!

BAG LADY

I could never leave you.

MAN IN CAN

Look, this isn't a joke. I'm... I'm a *leper*!

BAG LADY

A leper? A *leper*? Fred! (*BAG LADY* throws her arms around *MAN IN CAN* and kisses him on the lips.) Me, too!!

Ahhhhhh! I'm not Fred!!

MAN IN CAN

Not Fred?

BAG LADY

Not Fred.

MAN IN CAN

BAG LADY
(*Desperately thrashing through trash in can.*) Fred? Fred? Where's Fred?! Fred! Fred! What have you done with Fred?!

Calm down!

MAN IN CAN

Fred! Fred!

BAG LADY

Fred's dead.

MAN IN CAN

Fred, dead?

BAG LADY

Yes.

MAN IN CAN

Dead.

BAG LADY

You said so yourself.

MAN IN CAN

I did?

BAG LADY

I'm sorry.

MAN IN CAN

You do care.

BAG LADY

No, I don't. I don't care.

MAN IN CAN

Fred cared. BAG LADY

I'm sure he did. MAN IN CAN

Got anything to eat? BAG LADY

Pastrami. MAN IN CAN

On wheat? BAG LADY

Rye. MAN IN CAN

No thanks. BAG LADY

There's some *Evian* left in this bottle. MAN IN CAN

French. *Mon Cheriè*. You spoke French to me. *Je t'aime!* I love you! I want to sleep with you under my bascart. I want to have your baby! BAG LADY

(*Pushing her away.*) Are you nuts? MAN IN CAN

No, I don't think so. BAG LADY

Then what's your problem? MAN IN CAN

Lonely, I guess. BAG LADY

Well, you can't expect anyone to pay attention to you when you go around pushing a bascart all day looking like a tramp and calling it home, do you? MAN IN CAN

You live in a trash can. BAG LADY

No I don't. I'm only visiting.

MAN IN CAN

Lucky for you. I live here all the time.

BAG LADY

That's not my problem.

MAN IN CAN

Depends on your point of view.

BAG LADY

Funny you should say that.

MAN IN CAN

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