

TRASH TALK

TEN MINUTE PLAY

By Ben Kingsland

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SYNOPSIS: The trash can and the recycling bin can't stand each other. Waiting by the curb for pickup on a hot summer morning, the long-suffering can and the self-righteous bin butt heads about everything under the sun - especially over whose got a shot with the lovely little compost pile out back. Can they learn to live and let live before the trash truck comes?

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(TWO MEN OR TWO WOMEN)

CAN (m or f)..... a metal trash can *(39 lines)*

BIN (m or f) a blue plastic recycling bin *(39 lines)*

SETTING

The city street

TIME

The present

AUTHOR NOTES

Written for Journeymen Theater Company's "It's Not Easy Being Green" series. Produced by Journeymen Theater Company during the 2009 Capitol Fringe Festival - directed by David Binet, starring Mary C. Davis and Catherine Sagatov.

A trash CAN and a recycling BIN are set out on the sidewalk, full and waiting to be picked up.

BIN: You're disgusting.

CAN does not respond.

BIN: Personally, I couldn't do it. I wouldn't be able to sleep at night. Call me an idealist, but at least I stand for something. I've found my bliss. Can you say the same?

Say, friend, how about putting that lid on? You're getting a little ripe.

Slowly and deliberately, CAN scoots closer to BIN.

BIN wrinkles his nose.

BIN: That's real mature. Thanks.

You do know that you're a has-been, right? Trash is passé, friend. Someday soon, you and your kind are gonna get kicked to the curb - and nobody's gonna bring you back to the house. Maybe you'll be repurposed into finishing nails. Maybe chicken wire. Or maybe a kind family will see you at a yard sale, think "how retro!" - give you a power washing, and fill you with dry food for their two Great Danes. Would you like that? That's an okay life for a retiree.

It's not like I have anything against you personally.

CAN: Really.

BIN: Just the barbaric system you're complicit in. And the fact that you won't put on your lid.

CAN: It's hot.

BIN: I can tell. It smells like you've got a stew going over there.

CAN: If you were metal, you could talk to me about the heat.

BIN: Oh, here we go.

CAN: To ask someone metal to put on his lid on a day like this -

BIN: You had to play the material card, didn't you?

CAN: I'm not playing any card.

BIN: "Read 'em and weep, boys!"

CAN: (*Seething.*) I'm just going to tell you, all due respect, you don't understand heat the way I, or any other -

BIN: Because of my chemical composition, I'm not allowed to have an opinion on the heat.

CAN: You can have all the opinions you want. And you can keep them to yourself.

Beat.

BIN: How I love Thursdays. Shouldn't the truck be here by now?

CAN: Sun's not high enough.

BIN: Why'd they put us out so early?

CAN: What do you care? You got a hot date with the compost pile?

BIN: I wish.

CAN: (*Smiling, despite himself.*) Join the club.

BIN: You've got a thing for the compost pile?

CAN: Yeah. She's so down-to-earth.

BIN: I don't think you're her type.

CAN: . . . See, man, this is where I don't get you. Why would you say something like that?

BIN: Excuse me for having an opinion.

CAN: Excuse you for coming down on me twenty times a day. For a green freak, you do a lot of dumping.

See, Compost and I, we can chill. She's as eco-freako as they come, but that doesn't mean she lords it over you every second. We talk about food trash, and rats, and the crazy stuff people dump on us. We've got common ground.

BIN: “Common ground.” You get Styrofoam, and she gets vegetable peelings. Your work goes to a landfill, where it sits unchanged for millennia; hers evolves and expands and nourishes new life every second. If anyone has common ground with her, it’s me.

CAN: (*Baiting.*) We talk about the heat.

BIN: . . . She gets hot?

CAN: Oh yeah. She gets downright steamy in there.

BIN is incredibly jealous. CAN grins.

BIN: You’re lucky she gives you the time of day. What is it with women and bad boys . . . ?*

Talk about common ground; we’re part of the solution, not part of the problem. In fact - I love her to death, but I’m arguably more important. Her stuff degrades no matter where it is. But if it weren’t for me, all of *this* would be going to people like you.

BIN indicates his bottles and cans.

CAN: Do you want a trophy?

BIN: No need, friend. I’ve got the best reward of all: a clear conscience -

CAN: Oh, scrap me now . . .

BIN: - and the knowledge that the world is better because I’m here.

CAN: (*Indicating BIN’s back.*) I think there’s a spot you haven’t patted yet, keep going.

BIN: Jealous much?

CAN: No, man, I’m just tired, and hot, and I’m sick of hearing plasties like you talk themselves up -

BIN: *Plasties?* That is a materialist slur! You apologize, right now!

CAN: You’re serious? You’re crying ‘materialism’? Don’t make me laugh!

BIN: I’m not laughing!

* *IF PLAYED BY TWO WOMEN:* “What is it with men and shiny things . . . ?”

CAN: Hey, friend, remember when you said you hoped they turned me into nails? Or chicken wire?

BIN: No! I said I *hoped* they'd fill you with dog food.

CAN: Well guess what? I didn't appreciate that either!

BIN: Too good for dog food? What're you packing now that you're so proud of? Doesn't *smell* like roses!

CAN: Here - take another whiff!

CAN scoots closer to BIN. BIN recoils, covering his nose.

CAN: Smells nice? You like that?

BIN: You're disgusting!

CAN: And you're the most arrogant tub of trash I've ever met!

BIN: This is not trash! These are recyclables!

CAN looks into BIN's tub.

CAN: Let's see . . . looks like you've got glass jars with metal lids . . . a leaky detergent bottle . . . looks like a plastic code 7 too, uh-oh, someone should have sorted that out . . .

BIN: Big deal, an error.

CAN: Which the humans make every time. A worn-out piece of Tupperware . . . and are those newspapers under everything?

BIN: Paper should technically bag separately. What's your point?

CAN: You ain't perfect. And even if your junk were in order down there, don't try to tell me you're the great blue hope. Read one of those newspapers. All that precious raw plastic and glass in you that's gonna be broken down only gets re-used if there's a factory to buy it. If nobody's buying, it piles up in big heaps that look suspiciously . . . like . . . landfills.

BIN: Temporarily. And - please. My glass will be worn to sand before your Styrofoam even thinks about breaking up.

CAN: I'm just saying, don't make any bones about what you are. Take a good hard look at what's in your tub and tell me we don't both have a case of garbage in, garbage out.

CAN: (Continued) Someday, they'll figure out how to stop putting garbage in. Until that day comes, I'll do my job and I won't apologize for it. You let me do my job, and I'll let you do yours.

CAN scoots away from BIN, to where he stood initially. CAN puts his lid on. BIN watches CAN. Beat.

BIN: What'll you do?

CAN: (Taking his lid off.) Sorry?

BIN: Chicken wire or dog food notwithstanding . . . when that day comes, what do you want to do?

CAN looks at BIN.

CAN: . . . I always thought I'd make a good steel drum.

BIN: A steel drum?

CAN: Cleaned, hammered out, tuned, flipped upside down. Have some street musician play me on a busy corner. People crowd around. "Listen to that can, listen to that sound!" Watch his hat on the sidewalk fill up with money every day. Only thing that fills *me* up ever again is music.

BIN: I always wanted to work with kids.

CAN: Yeah?

BIN: I can see myself being a bin for toys. Blocks or dolls or something.

Scooting closer to CAN:

BIN: You know Rex, the bin across the street? His kids took him to the hill down the road on the last snow day, and they went *sledding* with him.

CAN: What! Is he cracked?

BIN: A dimple or two. I mean, they sent him over an ice ramp seventy-four times. But you should have seen the look on his face when he got back.

CAN: Mmm! Now that's living.

BIN: Yeah.

Beat.

CAN: Good question.

BIN: Good answer. It seems you do, in fact, have a degree of higher feeling.

CAN: And it looks like, sometimes, you do think about something besides yourself.

BIN: That said, I'm still not convinced we have anything in common.

CAN: Sure we do, man. We're waiting for a better day.

Blackout.

THE END