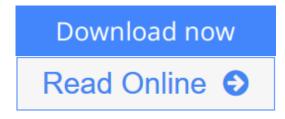


The Clothes They Stood Up In

By Alan Bennett



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The Clothes They Stood Up In is Alan Bennett's first story. Like Charles Dickens' novels which were first published in magazines, it originally appeared in the London Review of Books - which the author says 'seems to me (and not just because I occasionally contribute to it) the liveliest, most serious and also the most radical literary periodical we have'.



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The Clothes They Stood Up In By Alan Bennett Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

When life is pared down to the bare essentials, one can grow spiritually Aor shrink into one's basic instincts. Though profound statements as such are not to be found in British playwright Bennett's charmingly subversive and very amusing cautionary tale, his characters illustrate the principle in surprising ways. Mr. and Mrs. Ransome return to their London flat after a performance of Cos? fan tutte (Mozart's comic opera about changing identities) to find the place totally stripped. Even the casserole left warming in the oven is gone, along with the oven, all other appliances and every stitch of clothing. Mr. Ransome, a stodgy, misanthropic solicitor who is fussy about correct diction, is mainly concerned about the loss of his CD player and the earphones with which he has always insulated himself from his wife. Formerly cowed and repressed, Mrs. Ransome is surprised at her pleasure in replacing their lost possessions with a few inexpensive items. The burglary liberates her personality, allowing her to inch cautiously toward new interpersonal connections Afirst with an Asian grocer, then with the man who, the Ransomes eventually discover, has been living with their furniture and clothing in a storage facility, then with another man who holds the key to the bizarre thievery. Her social awakening occurs in counterpoint with her husband's more selfish gratifications, until a funny and fitting denouement permanently turns the tables between them. Bennett carries off his terse, surreal comedy with witty aplomb, adding to risibility with apt comments about the foibles of contemporary society and the consumer economy. (Feb. 8) Forecast: English readers familiar with Bennett's plays (The Madness of George III, etc.) snatched up this novella to the tune of 140,000 copies. The premise of being left without any possessions is provocative enough to entice readers on these shores, and the small size of the volume (4x 6) reinforces the idea that simplicity can be liberating.

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From Library Journal

British playwright Bennett here proves himself to be a master of fiction as well. Rosemary and Maurice, long-married but childless, return from a night at the opera to find that they have been divested of all their possessionsDright down to the toilet paper holder. Months later, they find that their habitat had been meticulously re-created in a storage facility. Ostensibly, the story involves finding out the who and the why of such an extraordinary chain of events, but it also exposes the abrasions and contusions, the fabrications and evasions that are common to many marriages. Rosemary is an immediately lovable character. Her innocence and her responses are sometimes laugh-out-loud funny, but her attempts to improve her marriage are also very poignant. This charming novel deserves a place in all fiction collections; one can only hope that Americans will receive it as warmly as their counterparts did.

-DJudith Kicinski, Sarah Lawrence Coll. Lib., Bronxville, NY Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Review

"Few write sharper dialogue or probe more tellingly into the frailties and occasional strengths of the human psyche than Alan Bennett. None knows more about getting each scene just right or is as consistently witty." -William Trevor

"Full of jolly, broad, and very English humour...a charm-filled holiday read."

—Alain de Botton, author of On Love and How Proust Can Change Your Life

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Christina Love:

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