

The Guaranteed Way to Remove Stains

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The Guaranteed Way to Remove Stains

Rasha Abdel-Mon'em

Rasha Abdalmoneim's interest in theatre has started following her graduation from the faculty of "Dar Al oloum". Further to her bachelor degree, she carried on with her studies until she attained a diploma in theatrical literature and she registered to obtain her master degree; her thesis was entitled "Power in the theatre of Saad Allah Wanus". The playwright has worked as a theatre critic as she has been concerned in following up the issues of the independent theatre in addition she has participated in organizing several artistic events and festivals. At the present time, she is still contributing in a variety of ways to the field of theatre.

Among her significant plays are; " The Haramlek tales", " Emergency case", " The king's ring", "A boy and a girl and other stuff" in addition to the play presented in the context of this book.



The Scene

A woman in her mid-thirties wearing black, sitting alone on a chair to the left of the stage. There is a clock behind her on the wall, and a wooden table in front of her, with a small tape recorder on the table together with a number of tapes. There is a big bath tub to her right, with a water tap above it. At the back on the right side of the stage, there is a bunch of colourful (blue - red - green) dresses set one next to the other, with a piece of accessory hanging above each of them together with a pair of shoes in the colour of the dress. There is a long mirror beside them.

1

The woman gets hold of the tape recorder and inserts a battery, inserts a tape, then presses the play button, and listens attentively.

Note: the sound coming from the recorder

could be the woman's voice.

The Recorder:

Here is the guaranteed way to get rid of stains.

1- Equipment: a wide pot, a suitable measuring spoon, a ladle for stirring.

In the meantime, the woman goes out and then comes back carrying a big wooden ladle in one hand, and an atomizer and middle-sized cup in the other hand. She sets the atomizer and cup on the table, and places the ladle next to the bath tub.

The Recorder:

2- The ingredients: two-thirds of the pot full of water; a suitable amount of caustic soda.

In the meantime she turns the water tap to fill the tub, then goes out and brings a transparent bag full of caustic soda. She puts it on the table, and turns on the tape recorder once again.

The Recorder:

3- Preparation:

- 1) Put the water on fire till it boils.
- 2) Add the caustic sodium as required, and stir it till it dissolves in the water.

In the meantime she touches the water, checking its heat. It burns her. Then she begins measuring the sodium, but as she repeats the process she is fed up, so she holds the bag and empties it into the tub; then she gets hold of the wooden ladle and keeps stirring amidst the rising vapour.

The Recorder:

4- Then put the stain which requires removal, and leave it in the water for a while, until it disappears leaving no trace. This is the guaranteed way to remove the toughest stains from bright white clothes.

She stops the recorder.

2

The woman sits on her chair next to the bath tub. She picks up the tape recorder and changes the tape. She presses the record button, holds the wooden ladle and speaks:

There are lots of people whose presence in our lives is not more than a stain; a big dry stain; a stain that doesn't respond to repeated washing; a hard stain, like a big stain of blood which has dried and people then poured mango juice and hibiscus tea on top of it, and they then splotched it with rotten food cooked with mutton fat; and then a mule came by and shitted on it. After that, it remained exposed to the air for years until the cloth underneath the stain was itself worn out, and there was nothing left but the stain itself.

Why would you keep such a stain in your life if you could wipe it out? Unless you are a stain collector; and I know many people of this type.

But in such a case, do not get upset when you find others avoiding or keeping away from you, because the stink of these stains will not be covered up by any perfume - regardless of how strong this perfume is.

However, if you belong to those who like to clean their lives as it goes, and do not like to see stains occupying any space in their lives, then this recipe will be of great use to you, as it doesn't just remove a stain, but it penetrates the stain and removes the contaminating ingredients that make it in the first place.
(Silence)

Although he knew that there was nothing I hated more than stains, yet it was the one and only mark that he left behind for me.

She stands up again, and continues stirring the caustic sodium in the bath tub using the wooden ladle. The sound of music rises.

Blackout.

3

She shows up on stage wearing the blue dress, together with its pair of shoes and accessories. She looks at the dress, and begins speaking:

He used to like this dress very much. He used to say: When you wear it I feel in no need of Viagra, and you will not be able to handle the ecstasy and will ask me to have mercy on you so that your heart may not stop due to excessive joy. But the power of your fascinating blue dress will drive me crazy and make me refuse to have mercy on you.

She keeps silent for a moment, then continues saying:

Whereas, in fact, he was in need of all the Viagra pills in the world so that I might have mercy on him. But that was his illusion about himself - an illusion he liked always to boast of; while this was my reality which I never revealed to him.

The sound of the clock striking. She looks at it.

Blackout.

4

The sound of the clock striking again. She enters wearing the red dress together with its pair of shoes and accessories. She tosses the blue dress on the table. She looks at the clock and then talks:

He's late. He's always late and forgets that sweet things do not wait for us, and that the people like him, who are always late, miss these things.

I wish you would come once on time; just once to get hold of just one sweet thing.

I have taken off the blue dress you like. Gone is the last sweet thing that you could have seen.

As to this red dress, I know that you don't like it. I knew it from the first time you saw me

in it. We were going to the cinema to watch a romantic film, but unfortunately it was no longer there, so we went to see a horror movie. Amidst all the blood on the screen, I was the only red stain in the auditorium. You came close to my ear and asked me: Who got you this dress? It's not because your great sensitivity led you to think that it was a gift from a previous rival. No, it was because you hated the dress and you wanted to find a reason for me not to wear it again. But it was your good luck; or rather not your good luck, but your deeds -being late made you miss the last sweet thing that I had ready for you, and you'll have your last glimpse of the red dress you hate so much.

She lifts the blue dress from the table and looks at it with displeasure:

I, however, never liked the colour blue, because it doesn't reveal red stains. I remember the first red stain in my life. It was on the blue school uniform. I rushed to the school toilet and stayed there till the end

of the school day. But the janitor noticed me and understood the matter. She laughed and said to me: You've grown into a young woman now. I saw happiness in her eyes - happiness of the kind that I didn't see in my mother's eyes, who was overcome by fear once she knew. I then felt as though I were another person, and I was asked to speak and move differently than before. I found myself considering my classmates to be mere kids. But the feeling stayed on - that same feeling; as every time this happened to me I would feel ashamed of myself as though I had done something wrong. I thought you would be the one to listen, see, feel, and rid me of this weakness. **(Her temper grows)**. I put on this blue dress for you on our first date, when I knew that you liked the colour blue. But you neither saw, nor listened, nor felt a thing. **(She calms down a bit)**. You then added to my weakness when you left me the second red stain on a blue dress - a stain that doesn't go away regardless of how hard I try to wash it.

She throws the blue dress into the bath tub.

We hear the sound of the clock striking. She looks at it. The lights dim up gradually off her face and moves on to the rising vapour.

5

She is still wearing the red dress. She looks at the door in a state of expectation and apprehension.

I used to long to the sound of this door's bell while waiting for him, as though it were the door to heaven. It used to merge into the wall once he left.

The sound of the door slamming was the most awful sound I could ever hear in my life. Whenever I asked him about the future of our relationship he would get angry and leave, slamming the door behind him. He never felt that it caught my finger as he slammed it. I used to sit and cry behind the door, like a

little girl being punished. I used to feel the place closing upon me and my breath running short, as if he had taken along all the oxygen. I used to feel very tired, but I used to feel even more tired when I found him returning, full of confidence, as though nothing had happened. And as he came back, the question surfaced again inside me:

Why aren't we getting married? He had no answer other than keeping silent and leaving me bewildered. Or he would leave me, slamming the door behind him. It took me a long time to realise that the answer was simpler than my bewilderment. The answer was a form of the question (Why aren't we getting married?) phrased in reverse: Why should we be getting married?

We hear the sound of a telephone ringing, but she does not move or care:

It was our last telephone conversation. He told me about it. He had spent days and months denying what my feelings were growing sure of

... For days and months I felt that everything about him was getting farther and farther away: his look, his touch, and the tone of love reverberating in his voice. He didn't tell me until I got to know it myself. He didn't tell me until I saw with my own eyes. He didn't tell me except when I was in no need for him to tell me anymore. He told me about it on the phone. He didn't even wait till he could tell it when we met face to face. He told me: There's another woman in my life. It's your fault not mine. You made me look outside for a woman elsewhere.

There's another woman. There is ... there's another woman in his life ... just as there's a fridge and a deep-freezer ... there's another woman. As though there was a first woman ... as though I were the first woman in his life. It was the first time for him to refer to me as a woman. He is telling me: There's another woman. For a moment I thought of thanking him, because I was lately beginning to ask myself: Am I a woman or a potato?

And I don't know why I found in his words an indirect answer to my question: I am a woman, but a first woman, because there's another woman, who of course is not me.

It's good that at least I ended up being the first in something.

As to it being my fault, it's something that I didn't need him to tell me about. All TV soap operas, songs and Arabic films say it: If you're unfaithful to a man, then you're a criminal and it's your fault. But if a man is unfaithful to you, then it's your fault again. I am the one responsible for issuing and banning all the faithfulness all over the world. I'm also responsible for several other things. I am the one responsible for a tree leaf that has withered in the gardens of Cairo ... and I am the one behind the economic crisis ... and I am the one really responsible for the wars in Iraq and Lebanon ... I am the one running all the assassination operations targeting the leaders of Fatah and Hamas in Palestine ... and I am the one who planned all

the murders, and the rape of street children and young girls; and when I can't handle rape, I limit myself to sexual harassment and orgies. I am the cause of repression all over the Third World countries.

Now, that there's no doubt that it's my fault, what am I supposed to do to fix the mistake. If I'm the one who made you look outside, externally, for a woman elsewhere, then there's definitely no way to fix this mistake except by making you look inside, internally ... very internally ... more internally than any internal place you can imagine. But while looking internally into this new inside, you will not find me, because I'll stay outside ... outside any inside that belongs to you.

Once again she holds the wooden ladle, and stirs violently.

6

We hear the door-bell. She is startled, and keeps searching for something:

The narcotic ... Where's the narcotic?!

She continues looking around till she finds the atomizer. She carries it and leaves in a rush, and then comes back again soon, disappointed:

It's not him. Although I'd be expecting him, I would always feel that he came all of a sudden, because while waiting for him I never knew for sure that he would come. He had stood me up so many times, and he made so many appointments and then showed up days or months later. And then he wouldn't even make an effort to give me a proper excuse:

Sorry honey, but while I was walking a girl with a hat walking behind me spat her chewing gum which stuck to my pants. And when I sat down in the taxi, it got stuck to the seat, and it took them a

long while to get me out of there ... Sorry honey, but my eyelashes were hurting me throughout the night ... Sorry honey, but I suddenly developed a corn in my little toe, so I couldn't come ... Sorry honey, but the alarm-clock was set 24 hours ahead, so I thought yesterday was today, and when today came, and I realised the mistake, it was no longer possible to consider today to be today, so I considered it to be tomorrow. Therefore the real today fell in-between, and the same applied to our appointment.

Such silly and lame excuses! He didn't even make the slightest effort to think of a reason for me to sympathise with him; or to come up with a logical excuse. He was selfish and lazy to such an extent ... and he took my feelings for granted to such an extent. **(She laughs)** He even told me once:

Sorry honey, but the vase standing on the table suddenly exploded right in my face.

So I said without making him sense my doubts about his claims: The vase exploded! You mean

the gas tank. He kept silent for a moment, and then said: Oh, yeah. Exactly. The gas tank. So I added: The one standing on the table! You mean the one next to the stove. So he went on and said full of confidence: Yeah. The one next to the stove. Thus, simply, and without him feeling the least bit of embarrassment, the vase lying on the table which suddenly exploded right in his face became the tank next to the stove which suddenly exploded also in his face.

7

The sound of the door-bell. She's started again. She hastily applies red lipstick in front of the mirror; carries the atomizer and rushes out.

First conception

She returns pulling a man's body. She places him next to the bath-tub, and sits down resting for a while. She then leaves again, and comes back carrying a small handbag and a big

gift-box which she places on the table. She does not pay attention to it, but goes to his body and puts a little pillow under his head. She begins to undress him. She may get into the mood of love-making which ends with her holding the pillow and suffocating him with it.

She carries the chair and sits on it away from the corpse. She gets up again and pulls the body into the bath-tub. She then picks up his clothes, stuff, and handbag, and holds them closely in her arms.

Second conception

The symbolism of stain-removal can be maintained by means of a blackout after her leaving the place. Then the lights come up again as the clock strikes, and we see her holding his clothes and stuff, without representing the murder in front on the stage or mentioning it.

The clock strikes once more. She looks at it, then continues staring at his things which

she is still holding closely in her arms:

These are the remains of the man who is evaporating and vanishing right now... How pitiful! These things used to have a very different meaning in my mind; I used to feel as if they were my rivals. He used to see them more than he saw me. For instance, his watch: having got what he wanted, whatever it was, he used to stare at his watch - his appointments and things-to-do would pop up then. He respected his time, kept good account of it and took care of it; but he never took my time into account, nor did he take my life into account - the life that has evaporated in his hands the way he is evaporating now.

used to tell me: Why are you thinking about life. Here we are having a good time. A good time! Love was just a matter of good time to him. It was such a good time that I had no right to interrupt it with my questions and queries about the future. I had no right to mar his joy with my tears. His choices were very carefully selected, and they located me in the slot of

entertainment. I couldn't rebel and seek the slot of seriousness.

You say you're getting old. So what? I'm getting old too.

No, it's not the same at all.

Time in a woman's life is a completely different thing.

Time in a woman's life means the loss of confidence, faith and desire.

Time means that the sponge within her has absorbed too many experiences - more than any man can realise.

Time means withered eyes, fragile bones and a porous soul.

Time means wrinkles, flabbiness and a hoarse voice.

Time means loss of fertility, menopause, and reaching an expiry date.

Time in a woman's life is a completely different thing.

The clock strikes. She hugs his things more closely.

Blackout

8

She enters wearing the green dress, and tosses away the red dress which she has taken off in the bath-tub. She also tosses away his things, one by one, during the following monologue:

This dress was a gift from the one man who has never hurt me, because he was strong, so he used to say what he thought and felt without fear of confrontations.

Oh ... How come I've never noticed this before?! You deceived me because you were weak. You had no confidence in yourself, not in anyone else. I now remember the first time we met and I told you my name. You didn't believe me, though this was the first time for me to tell

someone my name the first time we meet.

You were deceived, and that's why you were afraid; and your fear made you fragile. Fragility ... your fragility is the thing that I loved most about you. It is your fragility that wouldn't let you bear watching others hurt. It is your fragility that allowed you to recognise beauty even when it's buried deep in a dump. Your fragility is the thing that I loved most about you. It is the thing that made you deceive me.

It is your fragility that made you afraid of me. Yes, you were afraid of me. You were incapable of leaving me, and you needed an external reason to leave me, even if it were another woman. You were afraid of me, and that's why you longed for and sought my weakness - you used to rush to me whenever I told you that I needed you. However, there were many other times when I felt that I needed you, but I didn't say it.

You deceived me because you were afraid ... afraid because you're weak. And you only gained

strength over me because you were too weak for love. You were too weak for love because you were full of stains. Don't worry, I will soon rid you of all your internal stains. This is my last gift to you.

She remembers the gift, so she turns to the gift-box on the table, looks at it and wonders:

I wonder what is it that you've brought for me?

She gets up, opens the box, and finds a white dress with a pair of shoes and accessories in the same colour.

She looks ahead, steadily, and smiles.

Blackout

9

The clock strikes. The stage-lights are turned on. We see her sitting still holding the white dress. She looks into the bath-tub:

Now you're evaporating. In an hour's time there'll be nothing left of you. Even the bones will evaporate. Bones ... I'll finally reach your bones. My body used to dive through the layers of your flesh so as to reach one spot of bones. What a pity that I'll see them without being able to touch them. I've wanted to touch your bones for so long. I used to think that if I touched a bone of yours it would be like touching your soul. I believed very strongly that the soul inhabits the bones. That's why the bones are the first to be created and the last to dissolve. What a pity! If just a little bone could remain without being dissolved by the caustic sodium ... just a tooth, a nail, a hip bone, a finger or toe! Why didn't I think of keeping one of these as a souvenir before I put you here? I should've done so ... Do you know why?! It's because I'm going to miss you. I'm going to miss you a lot. There're so many things about you that I won't be able to find in someone else. There're so many feelings I experienced with you that I won't be ever able

to feel with someone else.

It's not remorse, because your disappearance will help me find the things that were not part of you, and experience feelings that I never had with you.

Blackout

10

**The clock strikes. The lights are turned on.
We see her wearing the white dress:**

Now you've completely evaporated.

There's nothing left of you, and there's nothing
bad left inside me towards you.

The stain you left on me is gone. And now I'm
back, pure and chaste.

There's not an iota of hatred within me towards
you.

Thus I've kept your love inside me for ever.

Forgive me if I've caused you any pain.

I didn't mean to hurt you. I meant to purge
you.

She leaves the stage in her white dress.

Blackout