



The Clothes They Stood Up In

Alan Bennett

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The Ransomes had been burgled. "Robbed," Mrs. Ransome said. "Burgled," Mr. Ransome corrected. Premises were burgled; persons were robbed. Mr. Ransome was a solicitor by profession and thought words mattered. Though "burgled" was the wrong word too. Burglars select; they pick; they remove one item and ignore others. There is a limit to what burglars can take: they seldom take easy chairs, for example, and even more seldom settees. These burglars did. They took everything.

This swift-moving comic fable will surprise you with its concealed depths. When the sedate Ransomes return from the opera to find their Notting Hill flat stripped absolutely bare—down to the toilet paper off the roll (a hard-to-find shade of forget-me-not blue)—they face a dilemma: Who are they without the things they've spent a lifetime accumulating? Suddenly the world is full of unlimited and frightening possibility. But just as they begin adjusting to this giddy freedom, a newfound interest in sex, and a lack of comfy chairs, a surreal reversal of events causes them to question their assumptions yet again.

The Ransomes' bafflement is the reader's delight. Alan Bennett's gentle but scathing wit, unerring ear for dialogue, and sense of the absurd make **The Clothes They Stood Up In** a memorable exploration of where in life true riches lie.



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