

THE ROUGH AND THE SOFT OF IT

A Short Play by

Jeremy Sony

Jeremy Sony
537 Richland Avenue
Athens, Ohio 45701
614-259-7669
jeremy@jeremysony.com

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CHARACTERS

FRANK M, 20s Midwestern guy whose girlfriend is a 50 dollar
cab ride out of his league.

ANNA F, 20s Frank's girlfriend. Generally, an empty toilet-
paper roll wouldn't faze her. Today... yeah.

THE ROUGH AND THE SOFT OF IT

AT RISE: FRANK is sitting, watching an
unseen TV.

FRANK

Aw, snap, that's gonna have some crunch to it!

(yelling off)

Babe, you go for a swim or what? Flush that Kohler, soap
it off, and get back out here. This episode is epic!

(ANNA enters with an empty toilet paper
roll.)

ANNA

Hey Frank, as much as I love this cultural experience --

FRANK

At the commercial break, babe. Set an eyeball on the
screen -- they're about to eat scorpions.

(ANNA steps in front of him.)

ANNA

We interrupt your regularly scheduled program --

FRANK

Babe!

ANNA

(re: the roll)

What is this?

FRANK

What?

ANNA

This, in my hand.

FRANK

It's an empty toilet paper roll. There's a whole bunch
of TP in the hall closet if you need it -- will you
please sit down? Scorpions!

ANNA

There's a whole bunch of TP in the closet? What good
does it do anyone in there? This is how you live? Look
at your apartment. There's a week's worth of dishes in
the sink, your bedroom floor is made of laundry, I don't
think you know what a vacuum cleaner is --

FRANK

Whoa, pause --

ANNA

-- is this how you think a girl wants to live for the rest of her life?

FRANK

It's an empty roll --

ANNA

-- this is a shard of my shattered dreams. I'm sitting in there and I could hear my mother -- "Anna, he's a gruff slob of a creature -- not like us. You need soft and caring. You deserve better than Frank. A big rough animal who can't change the toilet paper for you."

FRANK

Oh shit, babe, are you still -- going -- do you want me to get the TP for you? You could've called for help --

ANNA

-- I shouldn't have to. A civilized man keeps the toilet roll full and plentiful for his girl and doesn't leave her stranded and scared and alone --

FRANK

I'm right here for you -- sit with me here on the couch, I'll fix you a drink, that always makes you feel better.

ANNA

What will that change? I'm still holding this empty roll and all I see is the slob, the boy who gets his culture from reality TV and lite beer, and I realize all I've got is a rough exterior that's chafing my world. Maybe if you were softer, if you wouldn't grate on my family, I wouldn't be holding this giant empty roughness and wondering what the hell I'm supposed to with it.

FRANK

If I was softer? Are you cramping or something? One minute we're watching TV, and now I'm too rough for your family? What is going on with your mental state?

(SHE throws the roll at him.)

ANNA

I'm pregnant.

(FRANK doesn't respond.)

ANNA (cont'd)

I'm -- did you hear me?

FRANK

Congratulations?

ANNA

Oh that was not the thing to say --

FRANK

(overlapping)

Reflex action, babe, that was a reflex --

ANNA

-- congratulations?!

FRANK

Reflex! That's what you say when someone gets knocked up -- er, pregnant.

ANNA

Not when you're the knocker!

FRANK

I'm sorry.

ANNA

I knew you wouldn't know how to handle this -- I don't know why I took the test here --

FRANK

That's what you were doing in my bathroom?

ANNA

No, I took the test on your bed, I thought it was poetic. Seriously. I go in, sweating so much I think I'm too dehydrated to make this happen, but I manage -- and I finish and I reach for a nice piece of toilet paper and all I get is rough cardboard against my hand. Ten minutes I was in there with that.

(FRANK picks up the roll.)

FRANK

We're pregnant.

ANNA

And what started off as a little worry, took on all the rough parts of you. The messes. The immaturity.

FRANK

Because I'm too rough? Because I forget to change the toilet paper?

ANNA

It's not an empty roll anymore. It's you, Frank.

(Pause.)

And all it tells me is, you're not the kind of man who can handle something like this. Maybe I should leave.

(ANNA starts to go.)

FRANK

She's right. Your mother, she's right. I'm not soft or smooth. Sure I clean up well and I've smiled and done the best I can to show your family that side of me, but what the hell is so great about soft? So I'm a empty toilet paper roll -- there are worse things in life. I like being rough. And I try to make you rougher. Because when it's too smooth, there's nothing to grab hold to.

(FRANK exits.)

ANNA

Frank?

(FRANK enters, with toilet paper.)

FRANK

You can't have one without the other. I love your soft as much as I need you to love my rough. I'm stoked that I knocked you up, Anna. I'll be ready.

(FRANK offers the TP rolls to ANNA. SHE takes the empty roll.)

ANNA

You're missing your scorpions.

FRANK

I love you too, softy.

(LIGHTS DOWN.)

END OF PLAY