

BOXES ARE MAGIC

A ten-minute play by Allie Costa

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN:

YASMINE - Female. 20s-30s. The events of the day are *really* trying her patience - and so is Cali. Any ethnicity. Her name is pronounced Yaz-*mean*.

CALI - Female. Any age. Physically flexible but emotionally stubborn. Self-centered. Does things when she feels like it. Any ethnicity.

SETTING: A small apartment. Soon.

AT RISE:

*LIGHTS UP. A large empty cardboard box sits upstage center. CALI sits on the floor downstage, grooming. YASMINE stands behind her, arms crossed.*

YASMINE

Get in the box.

CALI

*(refusing to look at Yasmine)* No.

YASMINE

Get in the box.

CALI

No.

YASMINE

Cali!

CALI

Yasmine!

YASMINE

Get in the box.

CALI

No.

YASMINE

You love boxes.

CALI

Yes, I do. Boxes are magic.

YASMINE

So why won't you get in the box?

CALI

Even though boxes are magic, I will choose magic on my own time.

YASMINE

Choose magic now, Cali. We've gotta go.

*Cali glances at the box, then at Yasmine, then defiantly turns her back on them both.*

CALI

I will move when I am moved to do so.

*During the next two lines, Yasmine tries to grab Cali. Cali smacks her hands away and scoots out of reach.*

YASMINE

We are moving. Now.

CALI

I don't want to.

YASMINE

Neither do I, but we have to.

CALI

I don't feel like it. *(She yawns and stretches her arms)* The only thing I feel like doing is taking a nap. *(She prepares to curl up, then pauses as she realizes -)* If I fall asleep, you're going to pick me up and put me in the box, aren't you?

YASMINE

Yep.

CALI

*(sits up)* Then I shall fight my fatigue and remain vigilant.

YASMINE

If you don't get in this box right now, I'm leaving without you.

CALI

Fine.

YASMINE

I mean it. I'll leave, and I'm never coming back.

CALI

You always come back. I know your routine. The beeping wakes you up and you push me out of bed - rather rudely, I might add - and you wash off my smells -

YASMINE

It's called a shower -

CALI

- baths are better - then you offer me exactly one selection for breakfast while you drink that foul-smelling beverage -

YASMINE

- coffee -

CALI

- and you run around the room hunting for your ring of shiny toys -

YASMINE

- my keys -

CALI

- then you kiss me on the head in a perfunctory manner and rush out the door, leaving me alone for days and days.

YASMINE

I'm gone nine and a half hours. Ten, max. And I bet you're asleep most of that time.

CALI

Just because I am fond of naps doesn't mean I lay about all day. I am quite active in your absence, thank you.

YASMINE

*(scoffs)* Really?

CALI

Yes. I have quite a busy schedule. I tend to my grooming. I stretch my legs and sprint around every room. I inspect every shadow and sit in every patch of light. And it is extremely vital that I secure all of the windowsills. Squirrels and birds don't watch themselves, you know.

YASMINE

There aren't any squirrels here anymore, Cali. Or birds.

CALI

So I noticed. I find their absence rather strange, don't you?

*Cali tilts her head and looks out towards the window.*

CALI (CONTINUED)

Did they migrate early this year?

*Yasmine doesn't answer.*

CALI (CONTINUED)

Yasmine?

YASMINE

Yes?

CALI

Where have the birds gone?

YASMINE

Someplace - cooler.

CALI

When will they return?

YASMINE

*(slowly, carefully)* I don't know.

CALI

They always come back. If I wait long enough, they always come back. Just like you. *(beat)* I'm onto you, you know. You say we're going outside, you say we're going someplace great, then you put me in that horrible satchel or in a box and drag me to the place where people I do not know poke me in my private area. It is quite uncomfortable and thoroughly humiliating.

YASMINE

It's for your own good.

*Cali huffs and turns away from Yasmine.*

YASMINE (CONTINUED)

I go to the doctor, too - but unlike you, I don't bite her.

CALI

You would if she poked you in your private area.

YASMINE

Cali, please, we have to move.

CALI

I told you, I don't feel like moving. I shall continue to sit right here.

YASMINE

That's not what I- *(She sighs, then sits next to Cali and tries a new approach)* Look, I don't wanna go either, but we have to migrate.

CALI

Like the birds?

YASMINE

Sort of.

CALI

How come?

YASMINE

It's not safe here anymore.

CALI

Yes it is. I inspected all of the shadows and the windowsills today. Twice.

YASMINE

The house is fine, but soon... Everything's dried up outside, and the brushfires- *(She gestures towards the window)* Look at the sky. Do you see how orange it is?

*Cali looks out and shrugs.*

CALI

Though my night vision is far superior to yours, I cannot detect these colors you speak of.

YASMINE

You can see how bright it is, right, and feel how hot it's become? The fire's getting closer, and it's not gonna stop. They've called for a mandatory, permanent evacuation.

CALI

*(glaring at Yasmine)* You know how I feel about the vacuum. I don't trust anything that growls louder than I do.

YASMINE

Evacuation means you have to leave, you have to go to a new home.

*Cali panics and grabs onto Yasmine tightly.*

CALI

Not without you. I'm not going anywhere without you.

YASMINE

*(soothingly, as she hugs Cali)* It's all right. We're going together. It'll be all right.

*Cali looks Yasmine right in the eyes and says:*

CALI

You're not just pretending so you can take me to the poking lady?

YASMINE

I promise, no poking.

CALI

Okay. *(looking around)* Will our new home have windows?

YASMINE

Probably.

CALI

And windowsills, and good places to nap?

YASMINE

*(with a gentle laugh)* You've proven that you can nap anywhere.



CALI

Will we be safe there? In our new home?

YASMINE

*(stroking Cali's hair)* I hope so.

CALI

Then I will get in the box. Of my own volition. Momentarily.

*Cali closes her eyes and leans back into Yasmine.*

CALI (CONTINUED)

Let's stay in this patch of light, just one minute more.

YASMINE

*(spoken softly, still petting Cali)* Okay.

*LIGHTS SLOWLY FADE. END OF PLAY.*

Notes:

Cali is a calico cat, but the actor should not wear a furry costume with fake ears and a tail. Instead, she should be dressed comfortably and simply, in leggings and a shirt, with bare feet or socks. Consider calico fur colors are typically white, black, and orange.

On December 4th, 2015, Quebec approved a bill officially recognizing animals as sentient beings with biological needs. According to Barbara Cartwright, the CEO of the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies, "Until this law was passed, there was no distinction between a car and a cat in terms of legal rights. Anyone who has ever lived with a pet knows that animals experience emotions and feel both physical and psychological pain, but this is the first time in North America that these basic truths have been entrenched in law."

Global warming has significantly increased the number and size of wildfires on the planet. In August 2016, over 82,000 Southern California residents were forced to evacuate when an uncontrollable fire engulfed an area larger than the size of San Francisco. In 2018, a series of wildfires ravaged California, including the Woolsey Fire, which forced over 295,000 people to evacuate, and Camp Fire, California's deadliest and most destructive wildfire ever, which killed at least 85 people, destroyed over 10,000 structures, and destroyed the town called Paradise. Nearly 2 million acres were burned in 2018 alone. The National Wildlife Federation estimates that the overall area burned in the western United States will double by late this century. Experts predict that 25%-37% of Earth's species will be headed for extinction by 2050 if the warming trend continues at its current rate.