

HANDS DOWN

By Laremy Lee

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All characters in this publication are fictitious and any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

Cast

VICTORIA
In her late twenties

SOLOMON
In his early thirties

EMCEE/GUEST-OF-HONOUR

Performances

Hands Down was first staged on Thu, 23 Aug 2012 at Home Club, Singapore, as part of Asahi Silver Beat II.

Cast

Sheena Chan as BRIDGET

Lee Gaoju as NATHANIEL

Zaaki Nasir as EMCEE/GUEST-OF-HONOUR

Producer and Director

Laremy Lee

In a slightly revised version, *Hands Down* was restaged by Buds Theatre Company as part of Going Local 4. The production opened on Sat, 26 Jun 2015 at Tampines Primary School and had further stagings on 27 Jun at Toa Payoh Central Community Centre and on 3 and 4 Jul at Zhenghua Community Centre .

Cast

Atheena Som as VICTORIA

Ronnie Thomas as SOLOMON

Jayne Rajendran as EMCEE/GUEST-OF-HONOUR

Director

Claire Devine

Emcee *(voiceover)* ...and a very good afternoon to all of you on this Sunday here outside Takashimaya Shopping Centre!

(Lights slowly go up on VICTORIA and SOLOMON, each with one hand on a car.)

This is Jayne Rajendran, your friendly emcee and host of the Mediacorp Subaru Impreza WRX Challenge 2015. If you've just joined us, we're down to our final three contestants and – wait; what's this?

One of the contestants has just lifted his hand off the car! He's shrugging his shoulders! He's waving to the crowd! He's walking away! Oh, ladies and gentlemen, Mahesh Tiwari has called it a day after 81 hours and 22 minutes and he'll be heading back home as the second runner-up...

Solomon Victoria!

Victoria Solomon! We've won! *(VICTORIA and SOLOMON hug.)* I knew we'd double our chances of winning if we both took part!

Solomon And it worked!

Victoria Now we can finally go home! *(Heaves a sigh of relief.)* First thing I'm gonna do when I get home: take a nice, long shower!

Solomon Together? 'Cos if we both take part, I can definitely double your chances of –

Victoria Yuck, Solomon: I haven't showered for three days! I feel filthy enough as it is already.

Solomon Yeah... You're a dirty girl all right!

Victoria *(rolling her eyes)* Oh, Solomon – please: that makes me feel like going home to scrub myself with Dettol for two hours!

Solomon OK, OK. *(Beat.)* Then how about after your shower we spend some quality time together?

Victoria Solomon, we're *already* spending quality time together. Anyway after my shower I'm planning to watch –

Emcee *(voiceover)* ...in anticipation as the husband-and-wife pair of Victoria Fernandez and Solomon Subramaniam wait it out to determine who will be the last person standing in order for either one to win the car!

Pause.

Solomon Eh... That's strange. I assumed –

Victoria Yar, it's just a technicality lah. But since we've won, Solomon, you can put your hand down now.

Solomon Huh?

Victoria Take your hand off the car.

Solomon Why?

Victoria So we can win! Don't you want us to win?

Solomon Yes, I do, but –

Victoria Then take your hand off!

Solomon No, you take your hand off!

Victoria No, you take your hand off!

Solomon Victoria, why do I always have to be the one to give in?

Victoria (*rolling her eyes*) Tsk – you're not always "giving in". I give in to you quite a bit too, OK.

Solomon Like when?

Victoria Like... like sometimes, lah! Tsk, aiyah – it doesn't matter which one of us gives in today, right!

Solomon Then if it doesn't matter, you take your damn hand off!

Victoria Solomon David George Subramaniam! I'm warning you, ah: don't use that language with me!

Solomon OK, OK – I'm sorry! I didn't mean it, OK?

Victoria Yar, sure, whatever. (*Beat.*) Now take your damn hand off.

Solomon No! OK, I mean, like you said, that's not the point. At the end of the day, the car will still belong to the both of us, and the money we get from selling it will be shared, so –

Victoria Money we get from selling – hang on a minute: we're not *selling* the car. We're *keeping* it.

Solomon But, Victoria: do you know how much it'll cost? The, the ERP, the parking, the road tax, the maintenance, the petrol. The insurance. It's going to be at least a thousand bucks every month!

Victoria Solomon, I thought we talked about this?

Solomon Well, *you* talked about it –

Victoria ...last month before we entered the contest –

Solomon When I got home from work at 10pm –

Victoria And said, "Daddy's home!" – (*rolling her eyes*) urgh – like you always do...

Solomon Yeah, like I always do... (*VICTORIA rolls her eyes at SOLOMON again*) OK, anyway, all you did was grunt at me through the mouthful of mochi you were munching and wave the contest flyer in the air and say: "We're entering this competition to win a car". And when I asked: (*VICTORIA imitates SOLOMON here and mimes a lewd motion.*) "Whatever for, honey? Isn't my ride enjoyable enough for you?", all you did was roll your eyes, like you always do.

Pause.

- Victoria** And?
- Solomon** And that was that, lah. So I just assumed that when you said –
- Victoria** There you go, Solomon – always assuming!
- Solomon** OK, then please tell me, Ms Unassuming: why did we enter the contest?
- Victoria** OK, we entered the contest so we could use the car to get around the boondocks of Boon Lay that we have to call home. We had to spend so much on that shoebox of an HDB flat –
- Solomon** It's not a shoebox!
- Victoria** Then what is it?
- Solomon** It's a, er, a carton?
- Victoria** (*rolls her eyes*) Tsk. Yeah, well, this *carton* has cost us a car – considering how car and “carton” both cost a *tonne* of money in Singapore. Look, Solomon: this is a great opportunity. Let's grab it.
- Solomon** Look, Victoria, how about this instead: we sell the car; we invest the money in another property; we rent it out; we use the rent to pay off the mortgage; and finally, we use what's left over for our retirement.
- Victoria** Oh! Oh, that's *so* lovely, Solomon!
- Solomon** Yeah, I know right! (*Beat.*) And if there's enough left over, we can even buy a car then!
- Victoria** Oh, that's wonderful, Solomon! But don't you think there's a slight problem?
- Solomon** What?
- Victoria** What if we die before that?
- Solomon** No, we won't! Don't be such a – (*gasps*) What are you saying, Victoria? Are you planning to – (*makes a throat-slitting motion*)
- Victoria** No, you idiot! What I'm saying is: why wait to do something in forty years when we can do it now? (*Pause.*) So do you want to win this car or not?
- Solomon** Of course!
- Victoria** Then take your hand off now!
- Solomon** No!
- Victoria** Really?
- Solomon** Yes!
- Victoria** Are you sure?
- Solomon** Absolutely!

Victoria Then, then... I divorce you!

Solomon Huh?

Victoria If you don't put your hand down right this very instant, I'm going to divorce you!

Solomon Really?

Victoria Yes!

Solomon Are you sure?

Victoria Absolutely!

Solomon Then, then... OK!

Victoria What?

Solomon You heard me. I'm not going to take my hand off. What are *you* gonna do about it?

Victoria But... But I didn't mean to...

Solomon (*imitates VICTORIA*) "I didn't mean to..."

Victoria Oh! Oh, so that's how you want it, huh! Well, fine – we're getting a divorce!

Solomon Really?

Victoria Yes!

Solomon Great!

Victoria Fantastic!

They harrumph and look away from each other. Silence.

Emcee (*voiceover*) ...and if you've just joined us here at the Mediacorp Subaru Impreza WRX Challenge 2015, we're *still* watching in anticipation as the husband-and-wife pair of Victoria and Solomon wait it out to determine who will be the last person standing in order for either him or her to win the car!

Pause.

Solomon So...

Victoria ...if we...

Solomon ...get a divorce...

Beat. They look at each other. Their eyes widen. They both gasp and put both their hands on the car and start arguing wildly.

Victoria (*at the same time as SOLOMON speaks*) I'm not going to give up the car! I want the car;

Solomon (*at the same time as VICTORIA speaks*) You're not having the car! I'm gonna win it

I want to drive it to work every day and I'm going to use it until it breaks down because I don't give a hoot about your stupid retirement plan!

and sell it off so that I can use every single cent to buy one of those waterfront properties at Kallang to rent out so to hell with your short-term plans!

They harrumph and look away from each other. Silence.

Solomon Victoria? (*Silence.*) Is this really about the car?

Pause.

Victoria How long have you felt this way?

Solomon About the car?

Victoria About us!

Pause.

Solomon Do you remember when we decided to get married?

Victoria Yes. You asked me –

Solomon “Do you want to go and ballot for an HDB flat together?”

Victoria Yes! And that was the –

Solomon “...most romantic thing a guy ever told you”. Yeah. I remembered. You kept on hinting about it a year after we started dating. But Victoria – after I asked you that question, I felt so dirty; as though... *I* needed to go back home and scrub myself with Dettol for two hours.

Victoria What do you mean?

Solomon Victoria: that was, hands down, the worst thing I'd ever done in my entire life.

Victoria What! Proposing to me was the worst thing you'd ever done in your life? You bastard!

VICTORIA starts scolding SOLOMON and whacking him with her free hand.

Solomon No, no, Victoria – what I meant was that I never wanted to propose to you like that. I wanted to get down on one knee and propose to you in the middle of a restaurant, right after I handed the guitar back to the waiter after I was done playing “Grow Old With You”. Right after you found the ring in your champagne glass, right after the waiter was done pouring the champagne which I'd proposed we pop, just for the heck of it, since you always said you'd wanted me to be more random and less of a planner.

Victoria Then why didn't you do that?

Solomon Because I was scared you'd say “no”, Victoria! You're always shooting me down every time I propose something.

Victoria Solomon, the only thing you propose all the time revolves around indoor sports. And I'm not referring to racquets or shuttle cocks! (*Pause.*) You've always seemed

more interested in... taking it off and getting it on. When all I've ever wanted was for you to... put it on and take me off.

Pause.

Solomon Erm...

Victoria *(rolling her eyes)* Put *the ring* on and take me off *into the sunset*.

Solomon Oh...!

SOLOMON sighs. Silence.

Solomon You know what, Victoria, you're right. I'm always assuming. I knew from the beginning we had our differences but I... I assumed we could work it out. And clearly, it's not working. Look at us: we're quarrelling over a car. A goddamn *car*, for crying out loud. Should we even have gotten together in the first place?

Silence.

Victoria So how?

Emcee *(voiceover)* ...ladies and gentlemen, the organisers of the Mediacorp Subaru Impreza WRX Challenge 2015 have just made a landmark decision: after a gruelling 81 hours and 32 minutes, the husband-and-wife pair of Victoria Fernandez and Solomon Subramaniam will be the joint owners of this year's prize!

SFX: fanfare. Enter GUEST-OF-HONOUR.

Guest-of-Honour *(offering her hand to SOLOMON and VICTORIA)* Mr and Mrs Subramaniam – congratulations! *(The GUEST-OF-HONOUR shakes SOLOMON'S and VICTORIA'S free hands as they thank her.)* Still going at it, I see!

Solomon What do you mean?

Guest-of-Honour We've ended the contest – but you still don't want to put your hands down! *(She laughs as VICTORIA and SOLOMON sheepishly smile and put their hands down.)* Isn't that better?

Victoria I thought only one of us could win the car?

Guest-of-Honour Yes, but unlike you, *we* got tired of waiting. So we decided to shake things up a little. The car still belongs to the both of you, right? Now face the camera and smile while I present the car key to you!

The GUEST-OF-HONOUR presents the car key to SOLOMON. VICTORIA, SOLOMON and the GUEST-OF-HONOUR pose. SFX: flash of a camera and sound of a picture being taken. Exit GUEST-OF-HONOUR after thanking VICTORIA and SOLOMON and shaking their hands again. Lights dim slightly as VICTORIA and SOLOMON stand slightly apart from each other. They face the audience.

Victoria Is this it?

Solomon I guess it is.

Silence.

Victoria Well, enjoy your ride home then. Or at least enjoy selling it.

Pause. VICTORIA starts to leave.

Solomon Victoria – wait!

VICTORIA stops. Pause.

Solomon Victoria, this is ridiculous! And this is even more ridiculous but – (*SOLOMON gets down on one knee.*) Victoria: I know we've both been unhappy and I'm glad we entered this competition because it gave us an opportunity for some quality time together. And I'm glad we won this car too. But Victoria, I don't want to have won this and lost you. I'm not going to be able to enjoy the ride if it's only going to be me on it, and sweetheart, you're the only girl whom I've ever wanted to ride... with me. So Victoria Jane Fernandez: if we can promise to work it out, will you please re-marry me?

SOLOMON presents VICTORIA with the car-key ring. VICTORIA clasps her hands to her mouth.

Victoria (*nodding*) Yes, Solomon, yes!

VICTORIA and offers SOLOMON her left hand. SOLOMON grasps it, slides the car-key ring onto VICTORIA'S ring finger. VICTORIA clasps the key and the remote control in her hand, making sure only the ring is visible to the audience. VICTORIA grabs SOLOMON'S hands and pulls him to his feet. They stand facing each other.

Victoria Well?

Solomon We sell the car. But.

Victoria But...?

Solomon ...but we get a smaller off-peak car which won't be so costly. And the leftover cash can be our nest egg. How about that?

Victoria That...

Solomon That...?

Victoria ...sounds like a plan!

SOLOMON heaves a sigh of relief. Pause.

Victoria And us?

Solomon You, me, Subaru – torrid threesome?

Victoria Tsk... Solomon!

Solomon Victoria, I was just kidding! But I'm serious about working it out.

VICTORIA smiles at SOLOMON. They hug, and SOLOMON inadvertently smells VICTORIA in the embrace.

Solomon Erm... Victoria?

Victoria Yes, darling?

Solomon You... really need that shower.

VICTORIA slaps SOLOMON on the shoulder in a mock angry fashion. Beat.

Victoria Together?

Solomon Oh, Victoria – please!

SFX: upbeat music. Exit SOLOMON holding VICTORIA'S hand as they prance off-stage.

END.