

BEEF JUNKIES

One-Act Dark Comedy

by
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A deserted road on the outskirts of a not quite apocalyptic suburbia. Just before five o'clock in the not so distant future. COWGIRL, late twenties and the Bonnie half of a Bonnie and Clyde team, holds a syringe. Her hands shake. COWBOY, about her age, holds a backpack.

COWGIRL: I can't do it. My hands are shakin' too bad.

COWBOY: I got you, baby. ***(puts his hands on hers to steady them)***

COWGIRL: You'll miss the vein.

COWBOY: I'll be careful.

COWGIRL: Don't miss the vein. I'll bleed.

COWBOY: You won't bleed if I miss the vein.

COWGIRL: You'll hit something else. ***(beat)*** Come on!

COWBOY: You said don't help you.

COWGIRL: Can't you see I'm shakin'?

COWBOY: You want me to help you or not?

COWGIRL: Just find the vein!

COWBOY: ***(grabs the syringe)*** Hold still.

COWGIRL: I wouldn't need the hit if I wasn't shakin'.

COWBOY: Hold your breath.

COWGIRL: What's that gonna do?

COWBOY: Maybe your heart'd stop. You'd die for a second. Then you wouldn't move so much.

COWGIRL: Psycho! ***(SHE holds her breath; HE injects her; SHE exhales and relaxes)*** That's why I love you, Cowboy.

What'd you get me?

COWBOY: Lamb.

COWGIRL: Tastes like chicken.

COWBOY: It doesn't *taste* like anything.

COWGIRL: I can too taste it, and it tastes like chicken.

COWBOY: Everything tastes like chicken to you.

COWGIRL: I know what beef tastes like.

COWBOY: ***(beat)*** How long's this gonna hold you?

COWGIRL: Couple hours.

COWBOY: That's all?

COWGIRL: Were you standing there when he puréed this stuff? Feels like it's cut with chicken bouillon.

COWBOY: I can't watch the guy every second.

COWGIRL: Next time, bring the animal. I'll do it myself.

COWBOY: We can't lug the damn lamb around with us. It's not like we've got a car.

COWGIRL: So let it walk.

COWBOY: Before or after we kill it and slice it up?

COWGIRL: Take up less room if it's sliced.

COWBOY: And go bad.

COWGIRL: I feel like clucking.

COWBOY: ***(picks up his backpack)*** A lamb will not fit in this backpack.

COWGIRL: I know.

COWBOY: ***(pulls out a small insulated bag and holds up a vial from inside it)*** What's in these vials, that's high test.

And it stores easy.

COWGIRL: And it tastes like chicken. I don't feel so good.

COWBOY: ***(hugs her, trying to console her)*** I know.

COWGIRL: I need a cow.

COWBOY: I know.

COWGIRL: I know I'm weak.

COWBOY: It's not your fault.

COWGIRL: I can't stop.

COWBOY: You gotta get your mind off it.

COWGIRL: I see a hamburger.

COWBOY: Where?

COWGIRL: ***(points in the air not far away)*** There.

COWBOY: Where?

COWGIRL: By the tree. In the bun. Can't you see it?

COWBOY: Is it very small?

COWGIRL: It's ten feet tall.

COWBOY: It's not there.

COWGIRL: I know, but it's dripping fat, and it's sizzling. It's on a sesame bun, and you can just see some onion sticking out. There's a dab of ketchup on the onion. Maybe it popped out from under the bun. It's winking at me.

COWBOY: The onion?

COWGIRL: The burger. The bun keeps opening and closing.

COWBOY: There's no burger.

COWGIRL: I know, but it looks so good.

COWBOY: Where is it?

COWGIRL: **(points)** There.

COWBOY: **(walks toward the imaginary burger)** Am I there yet?

COWGIRL: It moved. It moved out of the way.

COWBOY: Where is it now?

COWGIRL: **(points again to a different spot)** There.

COWBOY: Tell me when I get there. **(moves toward the burger's new "location")**

COWGIRL: It moved again.

COWBOY: Now where is it?

COWGIRL: I don't think you should chase it anymore. The bun looks angry.

COWBOY: It's in your head, baby.

COWGIRL: I know, but it's shaking from side to side. Don't make it mad.

COWBOY: You shoulda gone vegetarian.

COWGIRL: I did. I can eat vegetables. They're good.

COWBOY: On your burger.

COWGIRL: **(to the imaginary burger)** Please, just give me a little bite. A little taste. Drip fat on my tongue.

COWBOY: You know what saved me?

COWGIRL: **(to the burger)** One little drop.

COWBOY: Fish. Used to raise 'em in a pond before I met you.

COWGIRL: **(to the burger)** I love you. I need you.

COWBOY: Salmon, sometimes in burger form, sometimes just as a filet. Kept me off the beef. I could go for a good piece of salmon.

COWGIRL: **(to the burger)** Where are you going?

COWBOY: It's about family values when you think about it.

COWGIRL: **(to the burger)** Don't leave me!

COWBOY: I had a nice tight nuclear family. My parents made sure we sat down together for dinner every Wednesday and Sunday. I set the table, my father said the grace, and my mom - I loved my mom-

COWGIRL: **(to the burger)** Come back! Oh, God!

COWBOY: My mom made us a balanced meal with a meat or fish dish, a vegetable, fruit, starch - and always some color on our plate.

COWGIRL: **(beat)** It didn't even drip anything on the ground for me to lick up.

COWBOY: It wasn't real.

COWGIRL: I'm gonna start shaking soon.

COWBOY: You just got an injection.

COWGIRL: The lamb didn't take.

COWBOY: You shoulda had a nuclear family. **(beat)** I might have something.

COWGIRL: Something what?

COWBOY: A scrap.

COWGIRL: A scrap of beef?

COWBOY: More like a pellet - if memory serves.

COWGIRL: Give it to me. I could run for days on a pellet.

COWBOY: Might even be a few pellets.

COWGIRL: **(grabs the backpack and looks through it)** Where is it?

COWBOY: Not in there.

COWGIRL: Stop torturing me.

COWBOY: I thought you liked being tortured. I'm saving it for a rainy day.

COWGIRL: It *is* a rainy day. **(beat)** One pellet now - I'll save the rest for later.

COWBOY: You can't eat just one. I know you.

COWGIRL: I could suck one. I could suck one for an entire day. **(finishes looking through the backpack)** Where is it?

COWBOY: **(pulls a tiny piece of meat from his pants; puts it in his mouth and tastes it)** Pork.

COWGIRL: Why'd you do that?

COWBOY: It was pork. No good.

COWGIRL: But you didn't know.
COWBOY: Smelled like pork once I checked it out. Examined it. Pretty sure it's pork.
COWGIRL: But you said it was beef.
COWBOY: I said if memory served.
COWGIRL: Yeah.
COWBOY: Memory didn't serve.
COWGIRL: How do I know it was pork?
COWBOY: Why would I eat your beef?
COWGIRL: Why not?
COWBOY: Do you want it?
COWGIRL: You ate it.
COWBOY: I put it in my mouth, but I haven't swallowed it.
COWGIRL: Give it to me.
COWBOY: It's pork. It rolled across my tongue again. *(swallows it)*
COWGIRL: What did you just do?
COWBOY: It was pork. No question. *(COWGIRL grabs COWBOY's mouth and opens it.)* All gone. *(COWGIRL reaches into COWBOY's mouth with a finger.)* What are you doing?
COWGIRL: Piece in your teeth. *(SHE puts the finger with the fragment of the mystery meat into her mouth. SHE instantly spits it out.)* Ugh! Why'd you tell me it was beef?
COWBOY: I said it was pork.
COWGIRL: Not at first.
COWBOY: I didn't know at first.
COWGIRL: You don't know who you're messing with. You don't know at all.
COWBOY: Do you? *(beat; pulls a pair of carving knives from a locked case in his bag)* Cow's supposed to come through here any minute. Last one. Don't know what we're gonna do when it's gone.
COWGIRL: But you'll kill it for me. You'll kill it for me because you love me and I need it.
COWBOY: It's the last one.
COWGIRL: That didn't stop you with that bird. What was that bird?
COWBOY: Ostrich.
COWGIRL: We went to the zoo, and you climbed into the cage and chased it until you caught it. And then you roasted it piece by piece using your knife as a spit.
COWBOY: I shouldn't have done that.
COWGIRL: You ripped off little bite-size chunks with your bare hands and fed it to me - right there in the cage. It was so romantic.
COWBOY: I don't think I knew it was the last one.
COWGIRL: You knew. You hopped over the sign that said "last ostrich."
COWBOY: Doesn't mean I read it.
COWGIRL: You said, "Look, the sign says last ostrich."
COWBOY: I was young. I didn't know what I was doing.
COWGIRL: It was last month. I bet I could keep from shaking if I had a hit of ostrich.
COWBOY: Too late.
COWGIRL: It tasted just like beef. I think I'm gonna start soon.
COWBOY: Wanna try another shot of lamb?
COWGIRL: My veins hurt.
COWBOY: No?
COWGIRL: *(shakes her head)* When's the cow coming?
COWBOY: Five o'clock if it's on time.
COWGIRL: What time is it now?
COWBOY: Four fifty-nine.
COWGIRL: Is it big?
COWBOY: I didn't ask.
COWGIRL: You didn't ask? Last cow and you didn't find out how much it weighs?
COWBOY: Last one. What's it matter? When it runs out, it runs out.
COWGIRL: What am I gonna do when it runs out?
COWBOY: Find something else.
COWGIRL: What?
COWBOY: I don't know. We'll think of something.
COWGIRL: I can't think of anything. I can't think. *(starts to shake a little)* I'm starting to shake again.
COWBOY: Don't ever take up salmon. Don't know what I'd do if I couldn't get a good piece of salmon in a pinch.

(There's an offstage moo.)

COWGIRL: My burger!

COWBOY: I think you oughta go vegetarian, sprinkle some ground chuck on top. Taper off.

COWGIRL: Just kill the cow first.

COWBOY: It's the last one. Gotta think about these things. You spice it up with some jerk sauce, veggie burger's kinda tasty.

COWGIRL: If there's meat on it.

COWBOY: You gotta expand your horizons.

COWGIRL: You said I could have some meat to taper off.

COWBOY: Yeah, I *said*.

COWGIRL: Get me some meat. Can't you see I'm shakin'?

(The moo repeats.)

COWBOY: Let me handle this. ***(hides his carving knives in the back of his pants)*** Hide.

COWGIRL: Where?

COWBOY: Pretend you're dead.

COWGIRL: But I can't stop shakin'.

COWBOY: ***(helps COWGIRL to the ground)*** Involuntary muscle reflex. Happens all the time. Jerk around as much as you want. Just don't talk.

(Enter SHEPHERD, younger than the others, holding a boom box, the source of the moo.)

COWBOY: Excuse me - have you seen a cow?

SHEPHERD: ***(waving the boom box at COWBOY)*** Sounds real, doesn't it.

COWGIRL: ***(shaking)*** Where's the cow?

SHEPHERD: What's wrong with *her*?

COWBOY: She's dead.

SHEPHERD: She just talked.

COWBOY: That wasn't talking. That was shaking.

SHEPHERD: I thought I heard "where's the cow?"

COWBOY: Teeth chattering probably. Tongue gets into the act, and you never know what might come out. It's all involuntary muscle reflexes. I once saw a dead man stand up, recite the Gettysburg Address backward and then choke the man standing next to him. They had to pry his ice cold hands off the man's throat. ***(beat)*** Dead people can do extraordinary things. Don't sell them short.

SHEPHERD: So how long will she shake?

COWBOY: Hard to say. Some of the dead can go on for a long time. What's the word on this cow?

SHEPHERD: You're looking for Betty?

COWBOY: Betty?

SHEPHERD: Betty the Bovine.

COWBOY: You named her.

SHEPHERD: We spend a lot of time together. But she's not here.

COWBOY: You and Betty-

SHEPHERD: We're just friends.

COWBOY: Where is she?

SHEPHERD: I can't say.

COWBOY: I'm not interested in killing her.

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