

Feathers Near the Nock

By
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Scene II

The stage is set as a small kitchen (stage left) and living room (stage right) with a dividing wall in between. The living room is sparsely decorated, the walls covered in cheep wood paneling, the plaid couch against the back stage wall (facing the audience) with a coffee table in front of the couch, a single recliner directly opposite the television. Next to the recliner is a small round table cluttered with an assortment of small vases and candlesticks. The kitchen has cupboards on the backstage wall next to a refrigerator that is next to the back door. On the far stage left wall is the sink and a small window above the sink. There is a table with four chairs in the middle.

Cora and her mother, Margaret, are in the kitchen. Margaret is at the sink, peeling potatoes and Cora is at the table snapping beans into a bowl.

CORA. Mom, do you ever just think about cows?

MARGARET. (She gives her a somewhat bewildered look.) No, not very often.

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CORA. I don't mean just thinking about them, but thinking about them. You know, how they nurture their young, sheltering them from the weather with their own, motherly bodies. Sometimes, when I drive slowly, when I don't care where I'm going - I can see them nuzzle a bit, the mother's face brushing against the softness of her babe-

MARGARET. They also use their tails to swat away flies. They use each other to satisfy itches. (She points out the window.) Do you see how they stand in groups? How they shit on each other? It's not affection.

CORA. But it could be so much more. You can see calves hop and prance. You can see happiness and joy. (Distantly) They don't care about direction. They stay close to their mothers where they are nursed and pro-

MARGARET. They are cows. We eat them. They are not happy. They do not care. They are stupid animals and we eat them.

CORA. But just think how it must feel to have your baby snatched away by the man who was feeding and housing you. The moms probably feel a degree of trust, and then their baby is taken from their side. They don't know why. They

don't even know, (Cora is cut of by a sharp look from Margaret). If they are stupid, that's why.

MARGARET. They were stupid before. They don't feel anything. (Angrily, Margaret puts last potato and the peeler in the sink then stares out the window.)

CORA. (After a short pause.) I guess that would give a whole new meaning to mad cow disease, huh? (She laughs, and Margaret, relieved, laughs also as she reaches on the windowsill for her cigarettes. As she lights up, Cora walks to the storm door and waves it).

MARGARET. Don't start.

CORA. What? I wasn't.

MARGARET. Oh sure you weren't. There's plenty of air in here. It's not going to kill you.

CORA. It's not the dying part I mind so much; it's the living miserably. You know it makes me sick. I'm allergic.

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MARGARET. One doctor, Cora! One doctor suggested that you got persistent sinus infections because of second hand smoke. (She inhales deeply, pauses, then exhales.) It's a bunch of bullshit that's what it is. It's all in your head. You just don't take care of yourself. Burn your candle at both ends and you're bound to get sick. The stress of everyday life is enough to kill a person.

CORA. Yeah, almost enough.

MARGARET. Don't start with that feeling sorry for yourself crap. You made your bed, young lady, and you're darn well going to sleep in it. I told you to wait to get married. I told you that you just don't know who you are until you're twenty-five, and look (she opens her hands) it's falling apart all around you. (She rests the cigarette between her lips as she pats Cora on the shoulder, softening her tone.) You just don't know which end is up, do you?

CORA. (Crescendo) You know, Mom, I never said anything to you, nothing – and here you are going off about the mess I've made of my life when no one asked you. John doesn't even care. Oh you think he cares. (Decrescendo) You think he's a saint the way he's all "I'll forgive you, Cora" and all "I'll love you, Cora," but you don't know what it's

like to be alone with him. You don't know what a monster he can be in private. I'm nothing to him.

MARGARET. Oh, Cora, honey. You're just tired. It's been a long week and you just need some time to think before he comes to the house in the morning. Bob and I have to go into town tomorrow and the two of you can be alone. You can talk this out. You'll be ready to go home by noon. You'll see, all will be forgiven.

CORA. Why forgiven? (Her mother dismisses her with a look.) Why does it have to be forgiven? Why do I have to be forgiven? Why did you forgive Dad? Was it worth it?

MARGARET. At the time, I was thinking of you, what needed to be done, what I needed came last. I was taught to give one hundred and ten percent in a marriage, and I did that.

CORA. Without expecting anything from him?

MARGARET. Of course I did.

CORA. Why did you forgive him?

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MARGARET. Because he asked me to, and he was sorry. (Quietly) And I loved him.

CORA. Again and again. Did he always say the same thing? Did he simply say, "I'm sorry?" And it was enough. (Pause) What made him not come back the last time?

MARGARET. That isn't something for me to answer. (Margaret walks over to the door.) Put the potatoes in the pot will you?

(A man whistles off stage.) Rusty! Git out'a there.

MARGARET: Aren't you looking all tanned and tantalizing. (Exit)

Enter Ray a medium height man in his mid thirties. He is wearing a plain pocket T-shirt with faded and worn blue jeans.

RAY: Hey there! (Short pause as recognition spreads across his features.) Well, if it isn't pretty little Cora.

CORA. (She turns her head and pauses for a moment.) Ray. Hi, Ray.

RAY. Whoa, don't get too excited to see me.

CORA. Sorry. How are you?

RAY. Well, it's been a while, but things are good, pretty good. You?

CORA. (Noticeable pause.) Better than ever.

RAY. Well you still look great but then, you never looked bad.

CORA. (Quietly.) Stop or you'll make me blush.

RAY. What?

CORA. Thank you.

RAY. (He nods.) So-uh, let's you and me go into town tonight. Now that you're older we can hit the Blue Marine together.

CORA. I think you know that I'm married, Ray.

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RAY. Well, from what I hear, not too married.

MARGARET. (Yells from off stage.) Cora! Start those potatoes right away!

CORA. Okay! (She retrieves a pot from a cupboard. Ray blocks her path to the sink.) What are you doing here, Ray?

RAY. Checking out the compressor in the fridge. (He steps toward her, staying her with his hand on her arm.) Hey. What's your hurry? She can wait a minute. (He takes the pot from her hand and holds it behind his back as he stands an arm's length away from her, his other hand still on her arm.) So what about tonight, pretty Cora?

CORA. I already told you.

RAY. No, darlin', you didn't-

CORA. No, then. I'm saying, no. Okay?

RAY. (He brushes his fingers over her cheek.) Ooh, I love that temper. You know what they say about women with a flash point temper, don't you?

(Cora reaches around him for the pot, but he holds her to him without a struggle.)

RAY. Now, Cora, I've known you for a long time, and I know how smart you are. You knew what would happen if you reached behind me, pressin' your body on me. You wanted me to hold you like this.

CORA. No-

RAY. Uh uh uh. You can't fool me, Cora. I can feel your heart poundin'. Reminds me of another time.

(She pushes away from him and runs off stage right. His laugh fades with the lights, and then he begins to whistle 'Goodnight Ladies'.)

Curtain.

