

Special Cheese
by McFeely Sam Goodman

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CHARACTERS:

a WOMAN
her HUSBAND
their two dinner GUESTS
the woman's EDITOR
a TV HOST
her CUE CARD GUY
a MOM
her son, a BOY
his DATE
FLOPSY & THUMPER, two rabbits from Mercury
BAMBO, their adopted son
Flopsy's THERAPIST
an EXERCISER
a radio TALK SHOW HOST
two CATERPILLARS

Playwright's Note: In thinking about the non-human characters in this play it is probably best to think in terms of cartoons. So, Flopsy and Thumper, for example, look and behave more like cartoon earth rabbits with antennae and space suits than an actual extraterrestrial species of rabbits.

WOMAN

It was and was not dusk.

Dusk is a quality of the light. But what she always notices is not the light, it's the behavior of the insects & the animals.

First of the gnats starting to become visible, then of the birds and the house pets slowly acknowledging the change of day into night.

Too, it was the quality of the light. The people on the deck coming out of the hypnosis of the post-meal talking to the awareness that the sun has gone down.

The rising to clear the dishes, urging, "Someone have the last sip of wine," and someone does, sometimes standing in the kitchen, or sitting, as she does tonight, alone on the deck. Taking it in (as though the finishing of the wine were a task equal in weight to the clearing and cleaning of the plates, the scraping of leftover food into tupperware) while she sits out on the deck alone.

And that's when she sees it.

TV HOST

So, what exactly did you see?

WOMAN

Well, I was sitting out on the porch, and my husband and our guests had already gone inside, but I was sitting out on the porch just letting the last drops of evening sink in.

The sun was down. But the sky was still red and purple and orange and dark blue, so I was just enjoying the silhouette of the trees against those colors and I noticed something seemed to be moving through the trees, another silhouette and at first I thought it was a big bird of some sort but, the thing is, it was moving very slowly and there's a certain way that a bird moves and it wasn't moving that way.

And I realized that it wasn't in the trees, it was behind the trees, flying along the horizon line, but

flying wasn't quite the right word because it was galloping. It was a white horse with a skeleton on its back.

TV HOST

And I beheld a pale horse and the rider who sat on him was Death. Revelations. Chapter 6, Verse 8.

WOMAN

Pardon?

TV HOST

That's from the Book of Revelations. The Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

WOMAN

Oh.

TV HOST

So, tell me, have you ever seen something like this before?

WOMAN

A horse?

The TV HOST laughs a charming laugh.

The WOMAN smiles the smile of someone who has just made a joke by accident.

TV HOST

Well, a flying horse.
Or a ghost
Or a UFO?

WOMAN

The other guest is an eight year-old kid who says he saw Bambi get sucked up into a flying saucer when he was playing in the woods. The implausibility of his story is clear to the woman, the paucity of concrete details and the fact that it concerns an animated character clearly undermine its veracity and for a moment the woman wonders if her story sounded the same way. She wonders if, in fact, this is the premise of the program, the ridiculing of tellers of obviously untrue supernatural stories. She herself has never actually seen the show, it was her agent's idea to get

her on the show (she is a writer of poems, this woman) with the idea that exposure is exposure and that frankly if we're being honest when one is the author of a book of poems that one hopes to sell to the general reading public one needs absolutely all of the exposure one can get.

The host, incidentally, is at least as charming and charismatic in real, off-camera life as she seems on tv which is a definite relief visa-vis the whole feeling like you're being ridiculed thing.

The kid's mother is here with him. She seems worried, absent-minded, as though she's not totally in the moment. She says she's having doubts about whether bringing the kid on the show was the right thing to do, from a parenting perspective.

She's wary, she explains, of being the sort of fame-seeking parent who exposes her kid to a world that will traumatize him or that later he'll be embarrassed and blame her for exposing him to ridicule at a young age, for not protecting him, though the truth is, the mom explains, it was the kid's idea, 100 percent, to be on the show, the woman who watches the kid during the day watches the show and the kid saw the call for extraterrestrial-unexplained-phenomenon-type stories and more or less insisted on sending a letter to the address flashed on the screen (which he by the way memorized, the mom tells the woman with more than a little pride in her voice), insisted, day after day, until the mom gave in, obviously not imagining in a hundred years that the kid would actually get picked, I mean there have to be literally thousand of letters coming in for something like this, right, and much better stories. And when the call from the show's producer did come the mom says she strongly considered not telling the kid before deciding that it would feel wrong to keep it from him plus the fact that the kid asks about it literally every morning over his corn flakes and she isn't sure she can take one more day of the pall that falls over the kid when she says the tv people haven't called yet, despite the fact that she has tried to explain to the kid that literally thousand of people must send in letters for something like this and to impart a little dealing-with-

disappointment-type life lesson. And so she told the kid about the call from the producer of the show and so now here she is and she's wondering now whether maybe it was a really enormous mistake. And what is really sinking in for her now is the concept that there really is no morally clear answer to anything, which was really a conclusion she reached in college via some very long, exciting conversations involving time machines and Adolph Hitler or power outages in hospitals leading to Sophie's Choice-style who-lives-and-who-dies-type dilemmas, but which she finds considerably less exciting in the here-and-now of this green room of this daytime talk show because the fact is that as a parent there are an awful lot of these gray-area-type decisions that need to be made and the fact is that really as a parent the fact is that the buck really stops with her in terms of making these decisions, (the dad is not in the picture anymore) decisions which obviously are not actually of Sophie's Choice-type stakes but which, nevertheless, given that the kid is eight and has practically his whole life ahead of him (which life, it seems, stands a pretty good chance of being irreparably scarred in the event of a wrong choice) seem pretty daunting.

MOM

So are you from the San Diego area?

WOMAN

No, I live here in L.A.

MOM

We're from the San Diego area.

We drove up this morning.

WOMAN

Are you going to take the kid to Disneyland while you're here.

MOM

No, we're not really into all that.

WOMAN

I thought because of Bambi.

MOM

Oh, no.

No, I have no idea how he knows who Bambi is.

Probably saw a book in a books store.

Kid friggin loves books stores.

Honey, don't touch the sandwich unless you want to eat it.

Do you want it?

It's ham and cheese.

You sure you want it? You don't usually have ham.

Ok, ask the man if it's ok.

Is it ok if he has the sandwich?

Yes, go ahead, honey.

Usually we're vegetarians, but when we're on a special trip I let him eat what he likes.

Do you think this is a mistake?

Bringing him on this show?

I mean do you think he's going to be embarrassed later to have been on this show?

Do you think those people out there, in the audience, do you think they were laughing with him or laughing at him?

I mean do you think this is the sort of show where the idea is to laugh at stupid people telling stupid-

Oh, I'm sorry, I mean I didn't mean to suggest

WOMAN

No.

MOM

I just wonder if this was a big mistake.

Behind the scenes.

TV HOST puts her hands on CUE CARD GUY's shoulders.

TV HOST

Tim,

CUE CARD GUY

Shit, sorry

TV HOST

you weren't here yesterday-

CUE CARD GUY

Yeah, uh my daughter-
er, my dog-

TV HOST

but I made a bit of an announcement, which
is that I'm pregnant.

CUE CARD GUY

Oh, uh, wow!

TV HOST

With twins!

CUE CARD GUY

Congratulations!
So, I'm going to be an uncle.

TV HOST

Sorry?

CUE CARD GUY

I'm going to be an uncle!

TV HOST

No, you're not.

CUE CARD GUY

Sorry, I must have misheard you.
I thought you said you were having twins.

TV HOST

I did.

CUE CARD GUY

So, I'm going to be an uncle.

TV HOST

No.

CUE CARD GUY

I don't think you understand how this works.

TV HOST

If you were my brother-

I mean, maybe figuratively speaking?

Two rabbits from Mercury, who look the way cartoon Earth rabbits imagine alien rabbits must look, ie. probably with antennae between their ears, in space suits.

mood: post-coital.

THUMPER
Feel anything?

FLOPSY
No.

THUMPER
We could adopt.

FLOPSY
Adopt?

THUMPER
Yeah.

FLOPSY
How are we going to adopt a kit in space?

THUMPER
From the Third World. We're passing by next month.

FLOPSY
I think they call it Earth.

THUMPER
What?

FLOPSY
The third world, I think they call it Earth.

THUMPER
Who does?

FLOPSY
The people who live there.

THUMPER
Well I don't live there, do I?

FLOPSY

No.

THUMPER

So, I'm going to call it the Third World.

FLOPSY

It's just not very P.C. is all.

So, what, we just stop in on Earth and adopt a kit?
Won't that put us off schedule?

THUMPER

We don't have to stop.

FLOPSY

Adoption is a lot of paperwork.

THUMPER

It is if you do it by the book.

FLOPSY

There's another way?

THUMPER

I've got a buddy. He was on a mission to Uranus-

FLOPSY starts laughing.

What?

FLOPSY

Sorry, that just always cracks me up. Uranus.

Laughs again.

THUMPER

My buddy, he said he and the doe he was with just yanked a kit up with their tractor beam. Just a drive-by deal.

FLOPSY

And that worked?

THUMPER

Sure.

FLOPSY

Huh.

I hope they don't change their minds again.

THUMPER

Nah.

FLOPSY

But they might.

THUMPER

Nah.

FLOPSY

They did before.

THUMPER

Nah.

FLOPSY

Twice.

Or well, not twice. But they sent us on this mission to Pluto and then as we were passing Earth the first time they said, "Never mind, we've decided Pluto isn't a planet. Come on back."

But then when we were almost back to Mercury they said, "Nope, it's definitely a planet. Turn back around."

So I just hope they don't change their minds again.

THUMPER

Nah, this time it's for sure. I got a buddy at the University. He says this time it's definitely for sure.

Later.

FLOPSY with her THERAPIST

THERAPIST

That's unusual, isn't it?

FLOPSY
What?

THERAPIST
Infertility in a rabbit.

FLOPSY
Not if you're on birth control.

THERAPIST
You were on birth control?

FLOPSY
I'm not an idiot. It was a fling. It's almost inevitable on a mission like that. But that's no reason to get knocked up.

THERAPIST
Why is it inevitable?

FLOPSY
Huh?

THERAPIST
A fling on an interplanetary mission.

FLOPSY
Because it's so fucking boring.

laughing.

Literally fucking boring.
Boring fucking.
That's why they call it missionary, right?

THERAPIST
Pardon?

FLOPSY
I kind of think that's the point.
Not that the Space Authority would ever come out and say it, but I think that's what they're hoping for. Think about it, it's always a buck and a doe, always single. I think they're hoping that by the time we get there we will have "populated the planet" if you know what I mean.

THERAPIST

But you weren't interested in that?
"Populating the planet"?

FLOPSY

Hell no.

Once you've got a family, that's it for your career in Space Authority. I mean if you're lucky you could be an administrator, if you consider that lucky.

No, this was supposed to be the first mission of many for me. I was going to be the first doe to do three missions. A hat trick.

Back on the space ship.

FLOPSY

But isn't it wrong just to lift some poor thing up with the tractor beam? To take it from its birth parents?

THUMPER

Things are terrible down there on the Third World. We'd be doing the kit a favor.

FLOPSY

But who are we to say-

THUMPER

Do you know what the incarceration rate is down there?

FLOPSY

But-

THUMPER

And what they're doing to their environment.

Trust me. The kit's better off.

FLOPSY

So, what? We do a flyby?

Therapist again.

THERAPIST

So, if you didn't want a kit,
why adopt?

FLOPSY

I didn't really think it through, ok.
I didn't really think he could do it,
you know.
I think a part of me thought I was calling his bluff.
And as it turned out I was right, sort of
I was at least partially right.
He was bluffing.
He hadn't done it before.
But we did end up with a kit.

THERAPIST

But it must have occurred to you that something might
happen. That something would happen.

FLOPSY

It was irresponsible, ok?
Is that what you want me to say?

THERAPIST

I don't want you to say anything.
What do you want to say?

FLOPSY

I fucked up.
I fucking ruined my career.
And for what?
because I was fucking bored.
bored of fucking being in space
fucking bored of him.
fucking bored of fucking.
bored of fucking him.

what can I say?
I should have brought a book.

Back on the spaceship.

THUMPER

It was a mistake, alright?

FLOPSY

I thought you said you had done this before.

THUMPER

My buddy

FLOPSY

I thought you said this was going to be easy.

THUMPER

I never said easy.

FLOPSY

You said drive-by.

THUMPER

Well we didn't land, did we?

FLOPSY

Yeah, but we didn't do what we were trying to do.
We fucked up.

What do we do now?
Are we going to put it back?

THUMPER

Are you kidding?

FLOPSY

Am I kidding?
Whose stupid fucking idea

THUMPER

Do I have to explain to you all the fucking reasons
why we can't put it back.

First, we're out of range. Turning back would take us
off schedule.

Second, any moron who's taken even basic Outer Planet
Ecology knows that even if we could put it back right
where we picked it up—which by the way the chances
have to be one in literally a million—even if we could
put it right back, it's never going to successfully
integrate back into society.

Thirdly, it's a major security-

FLOPSY

Don't you fucking lecture me on all the
it was your fucking stupid
just tell me what the fuck we do now?

THUMPER

Look, what if we said we did it on purpose?

No, shut up, hear me out.

Celebrities do it all the time, don't they.
Adopt a kit,
that's
you know
different
a different flavor

FLOPSY

You're a fucking bigot.

THUMPER

I think I'm being very progressive.

FLOPSY

So we keep it?
That's what you're suggesting?

THUMPER

Him.

FLOPSY

Huh?

THUMPER

We keep him. It's a him. He's got a little deer
pecker.

Look, it might not be the way we planned, but like it
or not, we're parents now.

We've got a son.

Carrot?

An office.

EDITOR

You don't have kids, do you?

WOMAN

No.

No, I don't.

No,

I guess you could say that my poems are my children?

I mean, I'm not, that makes me sound like I'm a cat woman. I'm not a cat woman, a, sorry, cat lady.

I don't have cats.

I have a husband. We're sexually active, we just don't have never wanted

No, I don't have kids. Why do you ask?

EDITOR

So, tell me about *Bambo*.

WOMAN

I didn't you I sent, I emailed you your assistant.

EDITOR

Yes, I got it
Chris got it
I've glanced at it
but tell me
In your own words
Tell me about *Bambo*.

WOMAN

Yes, well
as you probably noticed
as it turns out
it's turned out to be
less a book of poems

and more a sort of novel
but in verse, in free verse
so it's poem-like
it's just not a book of poems
anymore.

EDITOR

And what is it about?

WOMAN

What's it about?
What's it about?
What is it about?

EDITOR

Yes, what is *Bambo* about?

WOMAN

It's about a hundred and fifty typewritten pages,
haha.

What's it about?

hmmm.

I guess it's about life.

Open Mic Night.

CUE CARD GUY

Ok, so hear me out.
When a lesbian tells you she's pregnant,
It's such a relief.
No really,
because,
no seriously,
hear me out,
because at my age
I'm still at an age that honestly
when a friend tells me she's pregnant
honestly my first reaction
the first thought that goes through my head is
"Oh, shit. That sucks."
I know, it's shitty, but that's what happens.
But with a lesbian,
you know where I'm going with this,
With a lesbian you know it's on purpose.
With a lesbian you just get to go "Congratulations."
and that's it. Because you know it was on purpose.
If a lesbian gets pregnant by accident she's in real
trouble.

Afterwards.

TV HOST

Tim!

CUE CARD GUY

Oh

TV HOST

Great set.

CUE CARD GUY

Look,
Listen,
I had no idea you were here.

TV HOST

You invited me.

CUE CARD GUY

Yeah, but I didn't realize

No one ever comes.

TV HOST

I thought I'd come check it out.

CUE CARD GUY

Thanks.

uh

again,

if I had known you were here

I'm not sure I would have

TV HOST

What?

Oh, you mean

No, I thought that was very funny.

CUE CARD GUY

Thanks.

TV HOST

Tim, this is my wife, Jessica.

CUE CARD GUY

Oh, uh, nice to meet you.

Sorry, my hands are a little sweaty.

Any time I perform.

So, uh, I guess you're the father?

*A pair of caterpillars.
As they talk they spin their cocoons, until they
are completely obscured.*

CATERPILLAR TWO
That's the joke though,
right?

CATERPILLAR ONE
What is?

CATERPILLAR TWO
That musclebound masculinity is incompatible with
parenthood in our collective imagination.
That the idea of a 'roided up body nurturing a child
is just

CATERPILLAR ONE
Well, because the T from the 'roids would cancel out
the estrogen, right?

CATERPILLAR TWO
Would it?

CATERPILLAR ONE
Yeah, that's the whole thing with anabolic steroids,
right?
is that they send your T through the roof.
that's where you get all the wisecracks about the East
German athletes, right?
the lady weightlifters with the mustaches.

So all the 'roids that Schwarzenegger was taking would
cancel out the estrogen he would have to be taking in
order to carry a pregnancy.

CATERPILLAR TWO
Maybe, but I'm more talking about concepts of
masculinity and femininity as they apply to our ideas
of parenthood and nurturing.

I mean why is it so laughable, the idea of Arnold
Schwarzenegger carrying a child?

CATERPILLAR ONE
I didn't say it was laughable.

I'm just a little confused about the science.

CATERPILLAR TWO

No, but, like, as a culture,
if you look at Schwarzenegger's comedy films from
like the late 80s early 90s
or look at the comedy films of like
Vin Diesel, or Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson

CATERPILLAR ONE

Because I mean, scientifically,
the science is there,
it's just a question of implantation and hormones,
but to me the interesting question is

CATERPILLAR TWO

Dude, I don't know why you're so hung up on the
science. It's a comedy film. It's not science
fiction.

CATERPILLAR ONE

But, I mean couldn't I say the same thing to you
It's just a comedy film, so why are you pushing this
theory of societal perception of gender?

CATERPILLAR TWO

But you know what Freud says about jokes, right?

CATERPILLAR ONE

I bet you're going to tell me.

CATERPILLAR TWO

Freud says that a joke reveals an unconscious anxiety.
So I think the fact that we think it's so funny to see
Arnold Schwarzenegger pregnant is because it makes us
uneasy. We've polarized gender to a degree that means
we can't see a muscle-bound action star as maternal,
as nurturing

CATERPILLAR ONE

But that's what I'm trying to say,
You're looking at Arnold's body as a signifier of
masculinity, so for you the joke is the combination of
masculinity and motherhood.
But scientifically speaking,

you don't get to look like Arnold Schwarzenegger or Vin Diesel or The Rock just by acting butch. It's chemical. Those guys have, either naturally or artificially, probably both, an abundance of testosterone. So, they're actually, scientifically speaking, not ideal candidates for male pregnancy. Whereas a guy who, for example, eats a lot of soy, or just naturally has higher levels of estrogen to begin with, that guy would be a much better candidate.

CATERPILLAR TWO

You really think that they were thinking about this when they made the movie?

CATERPILLAR ONE

Dude, have you even seen this movie?

CATERPILLAR TWO

No, I mean, has anyone?

CATERPILLAR ONE

I have.

And basically the whole movie is about Arnold coping with the effects of the estrogen in his body as a result of his pregnancy.

His nipples are sore.

He's more sensitive emotionally,

He cries at tv commercials.

And these changes are upsetting to him, even though he wants to be a parent.

CATERPILLAR TWO

See, but that's my point.

Why can't a man be sensitive and cry at tv commercials?

CATERPILLAR ONE

Because it's not him.

It's not who he is.

The point is not that men should be embarrassed to cry, the point is that the hormones necessary for pregnancy are changing him into someone he isn't. They're changing his sexual chemistry in a way that conflicts with his gender identity.

CATERPILLAR TWO

You think that Arnie is transgender in this movie?

CATERPILLAR ONE

No, but—

The cocoons are complete.

A person in exercise clothes at the gym.

On TV is the 1994 film Junior starring Arnold Schwarzenegger.

The EXERCISER puts in earbuds and presses play on a cell phone or mp3 player or portable cassette player.

The WOMAN begins to speak.

The EXERCISER gets on a treadmill or stationary bicycle or other piece of exercise equipment.

WOMAN

Flopsy doesn't see the Space Authority therapist again. When she needs to talk to someone after what happens with Bambi (for Flopsy it's always what happened with Bambi, never what Bambi did. This is something she and the new therapist are working on) when she needs to talk to someone after what happens with Bambi she sees a therapist in a top secret bunker where she knows she will not be recognized. Flopsy knows it's not actually a top secret bunker, just a shitty office park, but it makes her feel better to pretend that it's a top secret bunker and that she is a spy or (more often) a dangerous criminal and that she comes here to speak truths that cannot be uttered in the light of day. Her therapist—the new one, not the Space Authority joker—says that this is ok, this pretending, or at least that it is the least of her problems. Her real problem, the therapist says, and it doesn't take a fraction of the advanced degrees that the diplomas on the therapist's walls grant to know this, Flopsy's real problem is her (Flopsy's) guilt and uncertainty regarding her culpability in the thing that happens with Bambi—the thing that Bambi does.

At some point during the above, CUE CARD GUY gets on the exercise machine next to the EXERCISER.

They smile at each other the smile of friendly strangers.

*Much later.
The boy is a man now.
He is on a date.*

DATE
How long have you been a vegetarian?

BOY
My whole life.

DATE
Wow, so you've like, never, tasted meat?

BOY
No, I mean, when I was a kid sometimes I would have a hamburger at a friend's house. But my mom was always a vegetarian so we never ate meat in the house.

DATE
So, when is the last time you ate meat?

BOY
Oh, that's kind of a funny story.
I mean it's funny now, at the time I was pretty traumatized.
The first thing you have to know,
and I've never told this to someone on a first date before, but I was on tv, once, when I was eight.

I was a kid with a really wild imagination.
And so I used to just make things up.
My mom didn't really let me watch tv, so maybe I needed something to keep myself entertained.

I think a lot of the ideas came out of things I read.
We didn't have a lot of books in the house necessarily, but on Sundays my mom and I used to walk into town and I would just sit in the children's section of the local books store for hours and so I guess that's where this comes from, but anyway

I was playing outside one day and when I came in for lunch my mom was like "Did you see anything cool in the woods, any animals or anything?"

And I was like, "Yeah, I saw Bambi." Don't ask me how I knew who Bambi was. I definitely never saw the movie. I had a thing about scary movies.

DATE

Ok, hold on, *Bambi* is not a scary movie.

BOY

I was a total wimp.

Anyway, probably I had read a Bambi book, but my mom was like "You saw a deer. Is that what you mean? You saw a deer?"

And I was like "No, I saw Bambi, like from the movie and he got sucked up in a flying saucer."

And my mom was like, "Listen, we talked about telling tall tales" She didn't like to use the word lies, so she called them tall tales. She said "This is why we got you that notebook, for you to write down tall tales in." Which was true, I had a notebook so that I guess I could express my creativity but also not just be lying to people all the time.

But I got stubborn because I guess I didn't want to be caught in a lie and so I insisted that I saw Bambi get sucked up into a space ship and eventually my mom just let it go.

Anyhow, when I was in third grade, for a while my mom would work on Saturdays, and this woman Carlotta would come over and look after me sort of, but mostly what she would do was watch daytime tv, not soaps but like talk shows and one day on one of the talk shows there was a thing that was like "If you have seen a UFO or another unexplained phenomenon write to us and you can be on the show." So when my mom got home I was like, "Carlotta and I were watching tv and on this show they said I can write in and tell them if I saw a UFO and be on tv, so I'm going to write to them and tell them about when I saw Bambi get sucked into a UFO."

And the really sad part was that I had no real desire to be on tv. I was just trying to reinforce the credibility of my original story. I thought that if I

really had seen a UFO and I saw that on tv I would want to write in and so I thought if I said I wanted to write in my mom would believe me that I really had seen a UFO.

So, I guess, to humor me, my mom let me write in and I'm sure she thought that would be the end of it, but the thing is, the producers of the show wrote back and said they wanted to invite me on the show. I guess the whole cute kid angle.

So my mom and I ended up driving from San Diego, where I grew up, to L.A. where they shot the show and I don't really remember doing the show, but what I remember is what happened in the green room.

They had set up this catering table with like sandwiches and fruit and stuff and there was this ham and cheese sandwich and if you can believe it, I don't think that I had ever really seen ham before so I was kind of poking at it and my mom was like, "don't poke at it if you're not going to eat it," so I was like "I want to eat it." So my mom was like, ok, go ahead.

And then I got on the show and I remember the host was like tell us something about yourself. And I was like, "I'm a vegetarian which means I don't eat meat."

And then on the drive home, my mom was like, "So you told the lady on the show that you were a vegetarian."

And I was like, "Yeah. I decided I want to be like you and not eat animals because they're cute."

And my mom was like, "But, honey you had that ham and cheese sandwich earlier and ham is meat. Remember I asked you if you were sure you wanted to eat it and you said yes."

And I was starting to get upset and so my words were running together and I was like "I thought it was cheese I thought you said it was called hamon cheese. I thought it was a special kind of cheese and that's why it was pink," and my mom was like no it was ham and cheese.

And I was like, "so what kind of animal is a ham?" and she was like "it's a pig, honey."

And I should tell you that I had just read Charlotte's Web and so this was pretty catastrophic, panic-attack-inducing news to me and I just remember saying to my mom, "But I didn't know. I didn't know. I didn't know." you know with tears running down my face and her trying to tell me it was ok.

Anyhow, that's the last time I had meat.

The EXERCISER cooking while listening to a radio talk show.

The TV HOST is a panelist on the talk show. She is joined by the TALK SHOW HOST.

TALK SHOW HOST

Welcome back.

Our topic this half hour is illegal adoption. I'm joined now by adoption reform activist and television personality, the host of *Burrow In* on PNN

TV HOST

Lee, I've got to jump in and interrupt you. I and the people we work with, we're really allergic to the term "illegal adoption" and especially "illegal adoptee." We don't believe that any child should be made to feel illegal-

TALK SHOW HOST

But it is illegal-

TV HOST

Of course it is.

TALK SHOW HOST

And it should be illegal. Mercury is over-crowded and overburdened enough as it is with welfare fat cats leaching the system, and

TV HOST

Lee, listen to me. I'm not saying that regulation isn't needed, but these are living beings we're talking about, not bootlegged DVDs. We prefer "undocumented adoption" and "undocumented adoptee."

TALK SHOW HOST

Wreee-oh. Wreee-oh.
Wreee-oh. Wreee-oh.
Here come the Word Gestapo again.

TV HOST

Gestapo?

TALK SHOW HOST

I just don't understand why I have to be so careful not to hurt the feelings of criminals.

TV HOST

First of all, these kits, undocumented adoptees, have not committed a crime. It's the parents who are committing the crime. I'd also like to say that as crimes go, as criminals go, undocumented adoption is really a crime of love. These parents love these children and I think that even as we take steps to address and regulate this issue, and I do think it has to be addressed, I think that it's incredibly important that we as a society, as a planet, make sure these kits who are caught in the middle of this, not by choice, that they feel loved. I think it's a much more serious crime for a kit to feel unloved than-

TALK SHOW HOST

Loved. I gotta love these kits? That I didn't invite here to my planet? I gotta love them? I gotta love Bambo?

TV HOST

You're talking about Bambi-

TALK SHOW HOST

Bambo, he called himself Bambo.

TV HOST

-Cottontail, who was involved in the recent tragedy in

TALK SHOW HOST

Involved?! He was the tragedy. Here we're talking about a kit who came here-

TV HOST

was brought here

TALK SHOW HOST

-illegally, without any paperwork, without any sort of background check, no psychological testing. And what happens, he goes and-

TV HOST

Bambi Cottontail is an anomaly. He is not a representative case. Most of these kits are hardworking, studious, there are studies that show that young students who have undocumented adoptees in their classes score higher not only academically, but also in terms of empathy and social productivity.

TALK SHOW HOST

Until they get blown away by a psychopath.

TV HOST

Please, Lee.

TALK SHOW HOST

Don't try to sweep this under the rug as a couple of bad apples. These kits are, on average, sullen, maladjusted-

TV HOST

That's just not true, Lee.

TALK SHOW HOST

I can give you countless examples of-

TV HOST

And if you do want to talk about this, about the troubled ones, and there are troubled kits who are adopted legally, through legal channels, there are trouble kits who are born right here, but if you want to talk about undocumented adoptees who have trouble adjusting, who don't feel welcome, don't feel that they belong, I think we have to start right here in on this show and shows across Mercury where people like you and I are setting the discourse and sending the message that these kits are unwanted, unloved, that they don't belong, that they're illegal, that they're criminals, before they even know who they are. We have to ask ourselves, is it any wonder that some of them-

TALK SHOW HOST

No no no no no no.

Oh no you don't.

You telling me that it's my fault that it's my fault that Bambo-

TV HOST

I'm saying that as public personalities we set the discourse and the way we talk about an issue-

TALK SHOW HOST

And I'm saying that's hogwash.
It's insulting. Beyond insulting.
To sit here as my guest on my show and accuse me of inciting a horrific crime.
I'm disgusted.
Frankly, I'm disgusted.
We're going to go to a commercial now and when we get back, I'm hoping you're going to apologize to me.

EXERCISER changes the station.

SCIENTIST

-factors, including the increased use of pesticides and GMOs which have wiped out the milkweed that used to grow in the cornfields of the Central US and provide vital sustenance to the monarchs during their migration.

Not to mention that we just really have no way of knowing whether the butterflies will be able to adapt their migration to the changing climate.

The caterpillars emerge as butterflies.

CATERPILLAR ONE

—I do think that the film presciently predicts some of the challenges faced by transgender or genderqueer gestational parents.

Well, we should probably get going.

CATERPILLAR TWO

I guess so.

So, this is it, huh?

Migration.

The big M-I-G-R-ATION.

CATERPILLAR ONE

Yeah

CATERPILLAR TWO

Yup, here we go.

CATERPILLAR ONE

Yeah

CATERPILLAR TWO

It's just
it's definitely this way, right?

CATERPILLAR ONE

Yes.

CATERPILLAR TWO

It's just

CATERPILLAR ONE

Yeah?

CATERPILLAR TWO

What if we're wrong?

CATERPILLAR ONE

We're not wrong.

CATERPILLAR TWO
Ok, but if we are

CATERPILLAR ONE
We're not

CATERPILLAR TWO
pretty disastrous consequences for our offspring
for the whole species, really.
And there aren't that many of us left.

CATERPILLAR ONE
What do you mean?

CATERPILLAR TWO
I heard a report on NPR that said that butterfly
populations are down 59 percent from 2011.

CATERPILLAR ONE
Woah.

CATERPILLAR TWO
I know right?

So, if we're wrong

CATERPILLAR ONE
Dude, we're not wrong.
We're genetically programmed to intuit the direction
we should be migrating based on temperature, location
of the sun, et cetera. It's science.

CATERPILLAR TWO
It doesn't sound like science.
It sounds like guessing.

CATERPILLAR ONE
It's science.

CATERPILLAR TWO
But what if that's wrong? What if things are
changing? NPR said that the climate might be
changing.

CATERPILLAR ONE
I still think we have to just go with our gut.

CATERPILLAR TWO

I just don't see myself as a particularly instinctual person. I think I'm a person who's prone to overthinking and second guessing. So what if I get in my own head and go the wrong way?

CATERPILLAR ONE

Just follow me.

CATERPILLAR TWO

But is that really how this is supposed to work? That I just follow you?

'Cause if I'm being honest that makes me pretty nervous too. Because, I think, if it turns out we're wrong

CATERPILLAR ONE

We're not.

CATERPILLAR TWO

If it turns out we chose wrong
If we go the wrong way
and our grandchildren die of the Frost
if things go south (no pun intended),
I want to be able to look my grandchildren

CATERPILLAR ONE

We're not going to meet our grandchildren.
We're not even going to meet our children.
We reproduce and we die. That's how it works.
The migration is made over the course of generations.

CATERPILLAR TWO

I mean in the Great Butterfly Beyond
I want to be able to look my grandchildren
or great grandchildren or whatever
I want to look them in the eye
and say
I did what I thought was right,
you know.
I don't want to have to tell my great-grandchildren,
You froze to death because I was a follower,

You froze to death because I didn't trust my own judgement.

CATERPILLAR ONE

So, what?

Everyone else is leaving.

Every other butterfly here's instinct is telling it, without a doubt, that the way to go is that way and the time to go is now.

CATERPILLAR TWO

That kind of self-certainty just scares me.

CATERPILLAR ONE

So you're going to go the other way.

Just because everyone else is going that way.

CATERPILLAR TWO

Nah, I think I'm just going to stay here.

It's nice here; the weather is good,

CATERPILLAR ONE

But the weather is going to change!

That's why we're all migrating!

CATERPILLAR TWO

If it changes, then maybe I'll consider moving.

But for now, it just doesn't seem worth the risk.

CATERPILLAR ONE

If you wait for the weather to change it'll be too late.

CATERPILLAR TWO

Look, I'm sorry.

I just can't go on gut.

A long moment passes.

They're not ready to say goodbye.

They never will be.

CATERPILLAR ONE

I'm going to go.

CATERPILLAR TWO
I know.

CATERPILLAR ONE
I guess this is goodbye.

CATERPILLAR TWO
I guess it is.

CATERPILLAR ONE
I love you.

CATERPILLAR TWO
I love you, too.

CATERPILLAR ONE flies away.

A date.
They are bowling.
Or walking in the woods.
Or rowing on a lake.
Or at a ball game.
Or antiquing.
Anything but sitting at a table in a restaurant.

EXERCISER

So our kids could have red hair!

CUE CARD GUY looks uncomfortable.

Oh, shit. I didn't mean
you and I
I just meant
if

Oh my god.
You probably think I'm moving way too fast.

CUE CARD GUY

No, it's not that
it's just
if we're getting serious

EXERCISER

Oh my god,
we're not
we're not
I mean
unless you
I mean
not that I'm
if you were
but I totally wasn't suggesting

CUE CARD GUY

No, I know
totally
I just mean
I guess
you should know
since you brought up kids

EXERCISER

I was totally joking

CUE CARD GUY

No, I just mean
I think you should know
just in case things
get serious
you should know
I think you should know
I
uh,
Chances are pretty good I shoot blanks.

EXERCISER

What does that mean?

CUE CARD GUY

Empty cartridges.

I, uh, come but nothing comes of it.

no swimmers.

sterile.
impotent.
I

can't have kids.

EXERCISER

Wow.
How do you know?

CUE CARD GUY

I,
it's because of a thing that happened when I was a
kid.

I guess now I'm the one who's moving too fast.

EXERCISER

No, thank you for telling me.

God, I'm so sorry.

CUE CARD GUY

I mean, it's not 100 percent,
I haven't been tested,
but the doctors are pretty sure.

EXERCISER

I'm so sorry.

CUE CARD GUY

No, in a way it's kind of for the best.

EXERCISER

How do you mean?

CUE CARD GUY

It's kind of a weight off.

I always kind of dreaded becoming a parent.
I mean not that I don't
didn't
want kids.
It just seemed like so much pressure,
because, like
my parents are amazing
I feel like they did an amazing job raising me.
But I look at them, as an adult,
and like I look specifically at my dad.
And it just seems like what made him great as a dad
I mean he's a great, inspiring guy,
but specifically in his parenting
I look back and I just see him trying to avoid doing
what his dad did,
trying not to turn into his father.
And I think that drive is what made him a great dad.
But I think that scares me,
because I think it's a lot easier
to react against something negative
than to try to emulate something positive
and I just worry
that if I had kids
I would just try to do exactly what my parents did and
inevitably I would come up short.

EXERCISER

But don't we all do that?

Like I feel like that's what being a grown up is all about.

You get older and you realize that to the world you look like an adult even though you feel like you know better. But then you think about the people you thought were grown-ups when you were a kid and you realize they were just kids too, and maybe they didn't have any idea what they were doing either.

CUE CARD GUY

Of course. I think that's totally right.

I think I just worry a lot about like the challenges of emulation.

Like I think about this in art, too.

I'm a comedian and a filmmaker and I find that in my practice as an artist it's almost more valuable to be responding to a piece of art you don't like because then you're always reacting against something, there's room for creativity because you have to imagine a solution. Whereas if you're emulating something you love, something you think is perfect, you just end up imitating, but you can never do as well, because there's no creativity, you're not responding to the same problem that the original artist was responding to and I really believe that great art, or really innovation in any field comes from problem solving.

EXERCISER

Ok, but there must be something about the way your parents raised you that you didn't like.

CUE CARD GUY

If there is it didn't make much of an impression on me. Really they were pretty perfect.

I also think that because of certain things that happened I'm inclined to view them more favorably.

EXERCISER

You keep alluding to this big secret from your childhood.

What happened?

CUE CARD GUY

Oh, it's not a secret.

I'm just not sure it's date-suitable conversation.

EXERCISER

What happened?

CUE CARD GUY

If I told you that I'd have to marry you.

EXERCISER

What?

CUE CARD GUY

You know

Like "If I told you that I'd have to kill you!"

But instead, I'd have to marry you,

because it would mean we were getting serious.

It was a dumb joke.

EXERCISER

No,

It's fine.

I just didn't get it.

CUE CARD GUY

No, it wasn't very good.

EXERCISER

Shooting blanks,

What's that from?

CUE CARD GUY

I think I got it from *The Life Aquatic With Steve Zissou*.

EXERCISER

I love that movie.

Dinner.

The WOMAN and her HUSBAND sit out on the deck eating with their GUESTS.

GUEST

Did you guys read Andrew Solomon's profile of Peter Lanza in the New Yorker?

HUSBAND

Why do I know that name?

GUEST

Peter Lanza?

HUSBAND

Yeah, I can't place it.

GUEST

His son, Adam, was the Sandy Hook shooter.

HUSBAND

Oh, yeah, shit. There was a piece on him in the New Yorker?

GUEST

On the father, yeah.

HUSBAND

Shit.

GUEST

It's intense.

HUSBAND

I can't imagine that.
Can you imagine that, honey?
If your kid did something like that?

WOMAN

No.

HUSBAND

I mean the guy must feel terrible.
Beyond terrible.
And can you imagine the hate mail he gets?

GUEST

The article actually said he gets a lot of positive mail too, supportive mail. From people whose family members have committed horrific crimes. People send him food.

HUSBAND

I wouldn't eat it.

GUEST

He doesn't.

ANOTHER GUEST

It seems to me that the really overwhelming question must be how do you reconcile the trauma of losing a child with the guilt and confusion of having raised a mass murderer?

HUSBAND

Mass child murderer.

GUEST

I'm not sure Lanza does.
Reading this article you really get the sense that he's trying to suppress the part of him that wants to mourn.

ANOTHER GUEST

But his wife was killed, right?
The mother?

GUEST

That was his ex-wife.
And yeah, I'm sure he mourns her.
But in terms of Adam, it really feels like he's really working to revise his mental picture of his son.
Like he has this kid he raised, this
"weird normal kid"
is the phrase he uses,
and over time,
that kid became a killer
without anyone really knowing how bad things were.
But I think he's, the father
is really
I think a lot of it is coming in retrospect

like he says in hindsight he thinks Adam would have killed him too, given the chance. But obviously that's only in hindsight. He didn't feel in danger before or he would have acted differently

HUSBAND

But don't you think maybe he has to say that?

GUEST

What do you mean?

HUSBAND

I mean because that casts him as a potential victim, as part of the "us" that feels violated by the crime, rather than the "them" responsible for the crime. Because in the aftermath the mother was really blamed, even though she was killed, it became a gun control thing and she became this deranged mother who had guns in the house and had taught the kid to shoot.

So, I mean doesn't the dad have to work not to be blamed like that?

GUEST

But I think he does blame himself. Or he wonders what he could have done differently. He talks about wanting other parents to recognize that this could happen to them. He says he hopes his talking to the New Yorker might help prevent something like that happening in the future.

ANOTHER GUEST

So does he say what he thinks he could have done differently?

GUEST

Not really?

I don't know. He talks about wishing he had tried harder to see him. He hadn't seen him for two years, because Adam was refusing to see him.

I guess he wishes he had recognized his son for what he was? That he had recognized that evil in him?

I don't know.

ANOTHER GUEST

But is that possible?

I don't think any parent could do that. I don't really think we can see evil in people we love. We always assume that their intentions are good, but that something went wrong, mentally or socially. We give them the benefit of the doubt.

I mean I don't think you can be a good parent if you think your kid is evil.

HUSBAND

Even if your kid kills twenty elementary school students?

ANOTHER GUEST

I'm not saying that that's not an evil, heinous thing to do, but I don't think that you can raise a child thinking he's a monster. You raise a kid thinking he needs help and you try to help.

HUSBAND

But maybe some kids can't be helped.

Isn't that what Peter Lanza would like us to recognize?

That some people can't be helped.

That, as hard as it is, if we teach ourselves to recognize evil in the world, even in our children, we can stop these kinds of atrocities?

ANOTHER GUEST

I just can't believe that.

I can't believe that there are kids that can't be helped.

GUEST

No,

ANOTHER GUEST

You think that there are kids that can't be helped?

GUEST

No, sorry, I zoned out.

But I just remembered.

I guess he did have a solution.

ANOTHER GUEST
What was it?

GUEST
He said he wished his son had never been born.

WOMAN
getting dark.

GUEST
Sorry, maybe this wasn't dinner party appropriate.

WOMAN
No, I just mean the sun is setting.

HUSBAND
Well, should we head inside?

Someone finish the wine.

WOMAN
I will.

GUEST
Here, let us help you with those dishes.

Everyone but the WOMAN starts shuttling the dishes inside.

The WOMAN sits and sips the wine, gazing off into the distance.

WOMAN
And that's when she sees it.

HUSBAND
What was that, honey?

WOMAN
Nothing.

BAMBO's journal.

BAMBO

I have done a lot of reading about The Third World, Earth, the planet I was born on.

I hoped that if I could learn about where I'm from, I might be able to solve some of my problems. I am sorry to report that I have not been successful. My extensive research has not helped me solve my problems. Instead I have learned that my problems cannot be solved by reading. They cannot be solved by understanding more. It turns out that there has always only been one solution to my problems.

There is an idiom on the planet where I was born. If someone gets laid a lot they say they fuck like rabbits. That single idiom explains pretty much everything that anyone would ever need to know about me.

Here on Mercury, everyone is a rabbit and everyone is getting laid all the time. Everyone but me. For a long time I thought it was because of my name. Bambi sounds like a girl's name. And so I blamed my "parents." (I put parents in quotation marks for obvious reasons). Since changing my name, however, I have begun to suspect that my problems go deeper. My problem is, always has been, and always will be fucking bunnies. Fucking manipulative stuck-up fucking bunnies.

Nowhere, on any planet in any known galaxy, does there exist the idiom "To fuck like a deer."

END OF PLAY