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Crossing the Cow Field

Or

An Ode to Inertia

By

Valerie Work

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Contact:

valeriel Lauren@gmail.com

917-623-0809

365 5th Ave, Apt 2R

Brooklyn, NY 11215

Characters:

1

2

Setting:

At the margin of a cow field.

The following scenes can be performed in any order; what follows is merely one option. I mean this - as in, there are 3,628,800 orders in which you can perform this play. When you begin rehearsal you should try them all and see which one you like best.

Adjacent to a cow field, occupied by numerous cows. In the wild heart of the cowland. The deep country.

Scene A

1
Are you going?

2
Where?

1
Across the field.

2
Oh. (pause) No. Why are you going?

1
I haven't decided yet.

2
Hmmm.

Scene X

2
Maybe I should go.

1
Really?

2
I dunno. Maybe.

1
Oh.

3

Scene O

1

There's this note. On the bulletin board in the hallway.

2

Which hallway?

1

The one on the way in to the kitchen.

2 (visualizes)

Okay.

1

Anyway, this note. Looks like it was cut out from the comics section of the local newspaper. Wyoming cow joke. It says. A certain longtime resident, cattleman, red face, straggly hair, starts complaining about all the other people complaining about him for grazing his cattle on public land. 'Why they even complain about my cows crapping in the streams - just look at this,' he yells out, scooping up a cow pie in his bare hands. He breaks off a piece and stuffs it in his mouth. 'It ain't nothin' but dirt! DIRT!!!'

(pause)

So that's the end of it.

2

Huh. (pause) Okay.

Scene C

2

I thought about taking one of the bicycles. But I went through them, and all of them are boys' bikes, and all of them are too large. The crossbars are wrong. The seats are uncomfortable. My feet, my feet don't touch the ground. Reach the ground. It would be a real problem when I needed to stop. I mean, they are not a very good option.

1

I know. (pause) It is a real problem.

2

4

This always happens to me. This Standard. If there is one kind of anything provided for a purpose, it is inevitably the wrong kind for me. It just always doesn't work. Persecution - what it leads to, a creeping, a gnawing sensation of persecution by inanimate objects and oversight.

1

Like the height of chairs.

2

Exactly, yes. The Standard height of chairs. It is always the same - on any standard folding chair, or standing chair, four-legged wooden chair, or even desk chair, there is always exactly the same distance between the seat and the floor. I know this, because it is always exactly one inch too high for my legs.

1

One inch too short for mine.

2

Yes! (pause) I can see that you too have this problem.

Scene T

2

What will you do when you get there.

1

Dunno. Some work I guess. I have this project - I keep trying to work on it. I will look at it for a while, and then I will pause, take a break, and then sort of poke at it some more.

2

What kind of project is it? A small project? A big project?

1

It started out a small project, but it just keeps getting bigger.

2

Oh. (pause) I also, I also have had projects like that. (pause) So, when you get there. I mean, now. How long will you stay?

5

1

Dunno. (pause) I am not sure, whether I am currently in the looking phase, or the poking phase, or the breaking stage. I have not decided yet.

2

Oh. Hmmm.

Scene P

1

Today I saw something new, something I had never seen before, or even imagined. In that fenced-off field across the street - you know which one I mean?

2

Yeah.

1

Where the bulls are kept. I saw one of the bulls running, literally charging a whole herd of deer, and the deer running away, scattering. He was like, get off my field. Get off my field, you deer. Like he'd finally gotten fed up with them scarfing down all the alfalfa.

2

Whoa. I didn't know they could run. I mean, I guess, bull riding, bull fighting, I've heard of it, but these cows?

1

I know.

2

Sedentary. Completely sedentary. Usually, not even curious.

1

No, not even the teenage ones, the young steers.

2

Remarkable lack of animation.

(pause)

1

So, now they might charge us.

6

2

Whoa.

1

The possibility.

Scene M

(A Stampede occurs. 1 and 2 are trampled by raging cows.)

Scene Y

2

I see a moon, a moon that is almost full, just a few days away. I can see the surface of the moon, with all the craters, and in the pattern of the craters I can see his face, of the man, the man in the moon.

1

A shattered brick.

2

A marshmallow.

1

Potato.

2

Tomato.

2

Tuperware container.

1

French fry.

1

String bean.

1

Elephant.

2

Really?

7

1

Yes. Curly tail.

2

Huh. I see a long, skinny fish with a whole bunch of air bubbles coming out of his mouth.

1

Soft, downy pillow in a diamond shape.

2

A soft serve ice cream cone - chocolate ice cream cone - without the cone, with the ice cream part squashed flat.

1

Peas in an oversize, enveloping pod.

2

Gosh, I really don't want to step in that one.

1

Step? On a cloud? What are you talking about.

2

Oh. I thought we were looking at cow pies.

(They both are weirded out.)

1

Gross!

2

Way gross.

Scene J

2

I have heard that out in the country, the deep country. Not the fake country, the fake country in, like, Pennsylvania, but the deeper country, say, out West, or down South. In the heart of this deep country, elsewhere, they will try to trick the visitors. The city folk, the tourists. They will try to trick them with the tale of the mythic -

(pronounced with a deep accent)

- Heel-Cow.

1 (testing the word)
Heel-Cow.

2
No, you have to drawl it out. Dig in to the accent. Really, it is spelled like 'hill,' 'h-i-l-l hill' when it is spelled out, except it never is. Heeeel-Cow.

1
Heeel-Cow.

2
That's better. Specially adapted to life in the hills, grazing, climbing the hills, chomping down wild flowers, sagebrush and yucca, the Heeeel-Cow's legs are specially adapted to life in the Hills, in that two of its legs on the left-hand side are shorter than those on its right. There is life, special life, in Tham There Heeeels.

1
And do the tourists believe them?

2
That's the idea.

Scene Z

2
The first time I crossed the field I was, I admit, terrified. I left the schoolhouse and padded down the road, stepped carefully over the grate, the one with the rounded bars, that they put out for the truck to pass over, while yet the cows stay inside the field, so their hooves don't get caught - that is the extent, the full extent of their knowledge. I stepped carefully down the dirt path, avoiding the cow pies. All of them turned towards me to stare. They have a blank gaze, empty of intention, intelligence, and always they are chewing. Knawing, digesting, flooding their stomachs with grass guts and fiber. Their coats are black, or brown, or sometimes they are spotted. Their tails flick, back and forth, back and forth, swishing. I stepped, they turned, watching. As I neared each one, each cluster, there would be a moment, a realization - I am really coming, not stopping, progressing forwards - run! It is like an aggressive gallop, but always shortlived. Six feet away is

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safe. They turn, continue to watch. The field stretches on, the pattern repeats - turn, watch, gallop. Turn, watch, gallop. Finally, I am across. I, too, am safe.

(pause)

1

Always, I am afraid. Each time, of the crossing.

Somehow, The End