

STANDING HEAT

By

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The Bench on stage represents a fence on a ranch outside of Bozeman Montana. Harry Lou and Daniel (both in their 50's) stand at the fence looking out on a pasture of cattle. Low sounds of mooing cattle are heard throughout the piece.

HARRY LOU

That was such a good dinner. I had no idea moose meat could be so tasty.

DANIEL

You. You were tasty.

HARRY LOU

Did you shoot that moose we ate?

DANIEL

I don't believe in killing. My friend shot it. I help him with butchering he gives me some meat.

HARRY LOU

Do you ever eat your cattle?

DANIEL

No I breed them. Artificial insemination.

(Beat)

You smell like wild thyme. A wild time!

HARRY LOU

Oh my God I can't believe I've done this. What was I thinking? How could you do this to me?

DANIEL

I wasn't the cause. Only the grateful receiver.

HARRY LOU

I didn't seduce you. Do I look like a seducer?

DANIEL

You looked like something on the discovery channel.

HARRY LOU

What?

DANIEL

Arms, legs, flung. Clothes ripping tearing sucking. Like a creature in it's natural habitat.

HARRY LOU

What habitat? I haven't slept with anyone since the 90's.

DANIEL

Your husband would be surprised to hear that.

HARRY LOU

Not really.

DANIEL

He's not your natural habitat. You were held captive in the false world of marriage only to be released here in Montana to reclaim your true nature.

HARRY LOU

By you? Don't kid yourself.

DANIEL

You didn't like being with me?

HARRY LOU

That's not the point.

(Beat)

Oh don't look like that.

DANIEL

I'm sorry.

HARRY LOU

It's not you.

DANIEL

I've never been a good lover.

HARRY LOU

Oh for goodness sakes. You were great. Everything was great okay?

DANIEL

There's no need to be ironic and bitter Harry Lou.

HARRY LOU

Of course I'm bitter. You don't think I don't know why you slept with me? To get close to Molly.

DANIEL

I loved her.

HARRY LOU

I know you did but that's no excuse.

DANIEL

I knew in the beginning I was too old for her but she was so young, so alive. We used to ride out together to check for signs in the cattle and she loved doing that and I loved her loving that and the cows loved her doing that...

HARRY LOU

Okay you know what? I'm sorry. I'm sorry your heart is broken. But you can't make it right by sleeping with me. I'm only the stepmother. Not the real mother. I have no influence, no genetic pull. I'm an appendix in the life of the family. I have no function at all.

DANIEL

You shouldn't feel bad. You were functioning wonderfully a little while ago.

HARRY LOU

This isn't about performance evaluation.

DANIEL

I wanted to be with you. Not for Molly, but for you.

HARRY LOU

Why?

DANIEL

I felt so hopeless since Molly left me. You seemed such a hopeful person. I wanted to find hope again and I thought you might give me that hope.

HARRY LOU

There is no hope for you. I'm sorry but you're a middle-aged man who's never been married and has slept with me.

DANIEL

If I'm so hopeless why did you come here Harry Lou?

HARRY LOU

You asked me. No one ever asks me to do anything anymore.

(Beat)

And I wanted to feel alive again. Did you know that Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance was written in Molly's house? I read it right there and I couldn't understand half of it but I wanted to. I wanted to feel Montana on my arms, in my hair. Feel the pulse of life in the smell of juniper and pine, the sky, eagles swooping down, the howl of the coyote, the wind in the canyons. I wanted to become this landscape, to lose myself and hold Montana between my legs.