

BEEF JUNKIES
By Jonathan Dorf

(A deserted road on the outskirts of a not quite apocalyptic suburbia. 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.

(Cowboy 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.)

COWBOY

Hold still.

COWGIRL

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

COWBOY

Hold your breath.

COWGIRL

What the hell'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 pureed 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

I 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.)

COWBOY

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.)

COWBOY

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.

(He hugs her, trying to console her.)

COWBOY

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.)

COWBOY

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.

(Cowboy 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 tried. I can eat vegetables. They're good.

COWBOY

On a 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.)

COWGIRL

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.

(brief pause)

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. He puts it in his mouth and tastes it.)

COWBOY

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.

I said if memory served.

COWBOY

Yeah.

COWGIRL

Memory didn't serve.

COWBOY

How do I know it was pork?

COWGIRL

Why would I eat your beef?

COWBOY

Why not?

COWGIRL

Do you want it?

COWBOY

You ate it.

COWGIRL

I put it in my mouth, but I haven't swallowed it.

COWBOY

Give it to me.

COWGIRL

It's pork. It rolled across my tongue again.

(He swallows it.)

COWBOY

What did you just do?

COWGIRL

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. Cowboy 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.)

COWGIRL

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.
(she 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 a MOO from offstage.)

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.

(beat as he 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.)

COWBOY

Involuntary muscle reflex. Happens all the time. Jerk around as much as you want. Just don't talk.

(Enter SHEPHERD, maybe a bit younger than the others, with a boombox—the source of the MOO.)

Excuse me—have you seen a cow?

(The Shepherd waves the boombox at Cowboy.)

SHEPHERD

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 dead people 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.

SHEPHERD

That'll make Betty's day.

(Cowboy pulls the knives from his pants.)

COWBOY

What do you think of these knives?

SHEPHERD

Do you want to kill *me*?

COWBOY

Just because a man pulls out two top quality carving knives is no reason to think he's going to kill anyone.

SHEPHERD

You brought up killing Betty.

COWBOY

To say I was *not* interested in it.

COWGIRL

Kill the cow! You promised!

COWBOY

Logically, there's no reason to assume that because I'm not interested in killing the cow that I have to be interested in killing something in its place.

Beef Junkies is a one act play, of which this is a portion. To receive a complete reading copy, and for other contact information, please return to the "Beef Junkies" information page (click your browser's "Back" button or visit www.singlelane.com/proplay/beefjunkies.html)