

The Lost Cow

Act I, Scene 1

Scene: the front porch of a weathered farmhouse. GLADYS enters from a door, center, and sees something in the distance.

GLADYS

George! Tyler's little calf is on our lawn again. Hasn't he fixed that fence yet? This is the third time this week the poor thing's gone stray.

GEORGE

(off stage)

Guess I better call him to come get it.

GLADYS

(bossy)

I *guess* you'd better come out here and lead the calf to our barn. It's supposed to freeze tonight, and that creature's too young to stay in the open. (beat) George? (another beat) George, I mean now!

GEORGE

(closer)

I heard you, and I'm coming! You don't need to scream your fool head off, woman. You'll scare the calf away.

GEORGE enters from the same center door. He's wearing denim overalls, and a baseball cap with the CAT logo on it. He's carrying a rope lasso, which he swings as he moves

GEORGE

Alright, I'm here, now where's the calf you're so concerned about?

GLADYS

(pointing)

Over there, by the horse trough. Be careful you don't trip, it's dark out there.

GEORGE steps off the porch and disappears upstage left. There's the sound of a lasso being twirled.

GEORGE

(off stage)

Oof! Hold it there. Now c'mon closer. I ain't gonna hurt you.

From offstage there is a loud MOOO and then Blackout.

ACT I, Scene 2

Scene, a grassy field with a rail fence dividing it in two. Morning. GEORGE and TYLER are on opposite sides of the fence. TYLER appears to be working on it.

GEORGE:

Need some help there?

TYLER:

I'm about done. You need something?

GEORGE:

Me, nah. I mean, the wife's always telling me to get some exercise. (He pats his belly). Gotta trim down so I don't die and leave her alone, she says, and chasin' that little calf of yours around in the dark is much more interesting than walking on a treadmill.

TYLER:

I came and got her, didn't I?

GEORGE:

You did, but see, it'd be better for all of us if you just fixed her pen so she can't keep getting out.

TYLER
(heated)

What's it look like I'm doing? I'm fixing this section then moving on to the part where I think she's getting through.

GEORGE
(calming voice)

Now, now, there's no need to get tetchy about it. Animals have their little capers from time to time, just like we do. (beat) You sure you don't want help? I got time, and I don't mind. It's the neighborly thing.

TYLER

Neighborly? Neighborly? You're nagging me about the lost cow, you want the fence fixed... how is that neighborly.

GEORGE

Look, I don't care how you handle it, but Gladys says next time that little calf shows up in our yard, she's calling animal control.

TYLER

You do what you have to.

GEORGE

Guess I will.

GEORGE walks off leaving Tyler at the fence, as the lights FADE TO BLACK.

Act II, Scene 1

Setting: the inside of GEORGE and GLADYS's house, the living room, with the inside of the center door, and windows looking to the yard beyond. GLADYS is sitting in a well-loved recliner, talking on the phone.

GLADYS

Hello? Animal control? (beat) Yes, the last chap transferred me to you. (pause) I'm calling to report that little calf is in our yard again. (pause) Listen, we've talked to the neighbor, and he's not keeping the fence maintained. She keeps getting out and yes the thing looks cute, but we're older, and we can't be chasing – (pause) – yes, I understand she'll be put up for adoption if the owner doesn't – (pause) No, talking to him hasn't helped. (pause) Alright then, my husband will meet you at our barn.

BLACKOUT.

Act II, Scene 2

Setting: the admin office of a county animal control facility (aka, the pound). TRACY and LAURA are both there. From off stage there is muffled barking, meowing and the occasional MOO!

TRACY

(holding up a picture of a little black cow)

Okay, Laura, I've got the photo ready. She's such a tiny little calf – I can't believe she's the escape artist that old couple says she is.

LAURA

(looks that the picture)

Awww. What a cutie. I hope someone comes for her.

A phone rings.

TRACY

(answers phone)

Hello, Theodore Leigh County animal control. How may I help you? (pause) Why, yes, we do have the lost calf from out in Whitney. Is she yours? (pause) No, she seems healthy. (pause) Well, we don't let any animal leave here without being vetted, - but (pause) – Yes, she was friendly at intake. Her stray hold is up on the fourth if you'd like to – (pause) Fantastic, see you then.

TRACY hangs up the phone and goes back to work. The phone rings again, and Lauren picks it up as the lights FADE TO BLACK.

Act II, Scene 3

Setting: County animal control. Rows of pens. Most have dogs, but one has that little calf. MOM and JILL are at the calf's cage.

JILL

Look, Mom! There she is! She's so cute, all black and shiny. That little calf is perfect! And it would be such a great 4-H project to raise a calf.

The calf sticks her nose through the bars of the pen.

THE LOST COW

Moo?

JILL

Mom! She likes me! Can't we take her home, please?

MOM

I don't know, Jilly-bean. A cow is a lot of responsibility, and this one (reads a card near the pen) – this one seems to run away a lot.

JILL

I think she was just running away because she wasn't loved wherever she was. I would love her, and Thistle would love her too – she's a cattle dog who doesn't have any cows to watch.

MOM
(relenting)

Well...

JILL

Please? You promised I could have a calf when I turned twelve and I'm almost thirteen already.

THE LOST COW

(mournful)

Moooo.

JILL

See, she wants to come home with us.

MOM

Alright, Jill, we'll adopt her. Let's go find an animal control officer and do the paperwork. We might have to have Dad come here with the trailer in order to get her home, though.

THE LOST COW

(excited)

Moooo!

MOM and JILL walk off and the lights FADE TO BLACK.

ACTII, Scene 3

Setting: the animal control office again, this time Laura is the only person there. The phone rings, and she answers.

LAURA

(on phone)

Theodore Leigh County animal control. How may I help you? (pause) You're calling about the lost cow? (pause) She's yours? (pause) I'm so sorry sir, but her stray hold was up two days ago, and she was adopted this morning. She didn't have an ear-tag, you see, and no one called about her until now. (pause) We have some lovely young goats up for adoption, if you'd like to see them...

The lights fade out as she continues to talk.

CURTAIN