

Plaque
by
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OPEN: Lights up.

The stage is sparse except for three blocks (or chairs). CLETUS stands center stage looking pensively into the sky. He holds a rock with painted markings in one hand and a pillow case in the other. The pillow case is also weighted down with stones. After a moment...

CLETUS
(Bird calling, loudly.)
Keek-keek ka-haw! Keek-keek ka-haw!

He stops and listens a moment, gripping his stone. He mumbles.

CLETUS (CONT'D)
(swallowing his words.)
Con-ser-nation, nothin' fent ner
hall umbbbbmbn...

Another pause.

CLETUS (CONT'D)
Keek-keek ka-haw! Keek-keek ka-
haw!

He scans the sky, again, ready to hurl his stone. Another pause.

CLETUS (CONT'D)
Keek-Keek ka-haw!

Another pause.

CLETUS (CONT'D)
Keek- ka-haw! Ka-haw! Ka-haw! Ka-
haw!!!

He lets his final "Ka-haw" echo as he scans the sky. Another pause.

CLEM
(Calling offstage.)
Clee-tus?

Cletus ponders. "Is he the 'Cletus' being called to?"

CLEM (CONT'D)
(Calling again.)
Clee-tus?

Cletus ventures a guess.

CLETUS
Yep?

CLEM enters slowly, searching for Cletus.

CLEM
Clee-tus?

CLETUS
Yep.

CLEM
Clee-tus?

CLETUS
Yep.

CLEM
Clee-tus?

CLETUS
Yep.

Clem finally makes his way up to Cletus, facing him.

CLEM
Cletus?

CLETUS
Yep.

A pause. Clem points at Cletus.

CLEM
There you are.

Cletus scans the sky.

CLETUS
Yep.

CLEM
Hey, Cletus.

CLETUS
Hey, Clem.

CLEM
I was a-lookin' fer ya'.

CLETUS
Uh-huh.

CLEM
And there you was.

CLETUS
Yep.

CLEM
Yep.

They both scan the sky.

CLETUS
I started in a-callin' already.

CLEM
I know, I hear'd ya'.

CLETUS
Yep.

CLEM
(Smiling.)
Sounded just like a big ol' crow.

CLETUS
Yep.

CLEM
Like a big crow echoin' through the
field.

CLETUS
Yep.

CLEM
Then I come over through the corn,
and it's just you.

CLETUS
Yep.

CLEM
(Here's the punchline.)
You ain't no crow, Cletus.

CLETUS
(Shaking his head, getting
the joke.)
Naw.

They both laugh at this, hard and stupidly, as if it was the funniest thing they've heard in months...which it probably is. After the guffawing dies down they both sigh, satisfied with their moment of levity.

Cletus smells the air.

CLETUS (CONT'D)

Ahhhhh, that's some good rotten corn. All this standing water sure helps. We gonna see us a mess of crows, I reckon. Ain't no crow worth his salt gonna pass up a mess o' good, de-composatin' corn like this.

Clem kicks at the dirt, nervously.

CLEM

Yep.

CLETUS

Mmmmmm-boy, I can taste 'em already. Nothin' I like better than a meal of good ol' crow.

CLEM

(Nodding.)

Yep.

CLETUS

Good ol', big ol', fat ol' crow.

CLEM

Yep.

CLETUS

Yep. Hey, you know what way I like eatin' crow best?

CLEM

What how?

Cletus ponders this, as if he never really thought about it before. Then it hits him.

CLETUS

Hot.

CLEM

(Pointing at Cletus,
agreeing.)

Yeah...!

CLETUS

Yeah! Hot crow.

CLEM

Hoo boy!

CLETUS
Good ol', fat ol', big ol', hot
crow.

Another pause as they scan the sky. Clem looks down at
Cletus' rock in his hand.

CLEM
I see you found Victoria.

Cletus tosses the rock in his palm.

CLETUS
Yep. She's out in the leech pit. I
knew she's there from that last
time I hurled her. So I waded out
there. Had to reach down clear up
to my elbow, but she was down
there.

CLEM
She cleaned up real good.

CLETUS
Yep, a good crowin' rock like
Victoria you don't get rid of so
easy. Nice and balanced...Fits in the
palm real smooth-like.

CLEM
Uh-huh.

CLETUS
Not much more a man needs in
life...Food...water...good crowin' rock
(a thoughtful pause.)
...a house.

CLEM
Uh-huh.

Cletus looks at Clem, confused.

CLETUS
Where's yer crowin' rocks, Clem?

Clem becomes nervous and agitated.

CLEM
Uhhh...

CLETUS
You ain't gonna knock them crows
out the sky with yer good looks,
boy.

CLEM
Uh, I don't feel so much like
crowin' today.

CLETUS
(Confused.)
What?...But...But you said last night
you wanted to.

CLEM
I know...

CLETUS
Said you wanted to get up at dawn.

CLEM
I know...

CLETUS
Made me turn off "Baywatch" early.

CLEM
I know...

CLETUS
Cold grease drippin's fer
breakfast.

CLEM
I know...

CLETUS
Didn't even change the newspaper in
my pants.

CLEM
I know, I'm sorry. I...

Clem gets more agitated. He looks around, nervously.

CLETUS
What the Sam Hill, Cletus?

CLEM
(Calling out.)
Okay! Okay! It's time, now! It's
time!

Entering briskly is DR. LARUTH VAN BECKENHAM. She is dressed smartly, wears glasses and carries a clipboard. She holds out her hand to Cletus, who shakes it, utterly confused.

DR. LARUTH

Hello, Cletus. Dr. LaRuth Van Beckenham, psychologist, family therapist and star of the popular syndicated TV show "Learning To Love."

CLETUS

(Utterly confused.)
What?

DR. LARUTH

You can also reach me on the web at www.learntolove.com

CLETUS

(More confused.)
Dub-ya what?

DR. LARUTH

I'm here because your brother Clem called me. He's concerned about you, Cletus. He feels you're changing. Your new ways have him confused and frightened. He says he doesn't know who you are anymore. He and I feel it's time for...an intervention.

Music swells (and a possible light change) as Dr. LaRuth arranges the chairs. The two men sit, uncomfortably. We are now on Dr. LaRuth's TV show.

DR. LARUTH (CONT'D)

Let's start with you, Clem. What is it about Cletus' behavior that has you concerned about him?

CLEM

Well, I think he's actin'...funny.

DR. LARUTH

Mm-hmm. Could you elaborate on that?

CLEM

(A pause.)
Real funny.

DR. LARUTH
 Mm-hmm, and how does that make you
 feel, Cletus?

Cletus stares fearfully at the audience, clutching his sack
 of rocks to his chest.

DR. LARUTH (CONT'D)
 Clem?

CLEM
 He's takin' to washin' more than
 once every new moon. He don't
 hardly beat the dog. He don't do
 whittlin' or pig callin' and he
 don't ever hardly have sex with the
 cow no more.

DR. LARUTH
 Cletus?

Cletus continues to stare.

CLEM
 And he's getting downright mean,
 too. Always a-yellin' and a-
 criticizin'.

CLETUS
 That's cause your acting all so
 high and mighty.

DR. LARUTH
 Go with that, Cletus.

CLETUS
 Getting' all those fancy entree-
 pernural magazines in the mail.
 Ain't hardly got no pictures in
 'em!

CLEM
 I'm tryin' ta' better myself! I'm
 goin' ta' start my own business.

CLETUS
 The hell you is.

CLEM
 The hell I am! I'm startin' a fast
 food restaurant.

CLETUS
 Stupid...

CLEM

You know what I'm callin' it?

DR. LARUTH

What's that, Clem?

CLEM

"Grits In The Pan." Know what we're gonna serve?

DR. LARUTH

I can't guess.

CLEM

Grits...in a pan.

Clem pantomimes eating grits out of a pan with a spoon.

DR. LARUTH

Fascinating.

CLEM

We'll have big grits in the pan, and children's size grits in the pan, and a drive up winder where's you can get grits in a throw-away pan. I even thunk up a song, you want to hear?

DR. LARUTH

Please.

Clem stands and clears his throat. Then...

CLEM

"Grits in the pan! Grits in the pan! You and me loves grits in the pan!"

He pauses a moment, as if there will be a second verse. He sits.

DR. LARUTH

Lovely.

CLETUS

Stupid. Thinks he's so high and mighty 'cause he can almost read and cipher and what not. Boy finishes the third grade and acts like he's king o' the pig slaughter. Well some of us couldn't get no fancy education.

(MORE)

CLETUS (CONT'D)

Some of us had to work the farm and
slop the hogs and drain Mama's open
sores-

CLEM

--You leave my Mama out of this!

CLETUS

You think them newspapers piled up
inside the house by themselves?!
You think those beat up cars just
magically appeared on the lawn?!
You think that dog was born with
three legs?! I worked my fingers to
the nub 'round here! Just so you
could think up yer stupid fast food
ideas!

CLEM

--Who you callin' stupid!

CLETUS

--I'm a-callin' you stupid, stupid!

Dr. LaRuth shooshes them and tries to calm them.

DR. LARUTH

Okay, now boys, now boys, now
boys!...Let's find our quiet place,
shall we?

(Her mantra.)

"Cool moss. Cool moss. Cool moss."

The men quiet down.

DR. LARUTH (CONT'D)

Now Cletus, you don't really think
your brother's idea is stupid, do
you?

CLETUS

Yeah.

(He looks over at Clem.)

Well...maybe...naw.

DR. LARUTH

Don't you think you might just be a
little bit jealous of his idea?

CLETUS

(Hard to admit.)

Yep.

DR. LARUTH
And your brother has made many
sacrifices to help you along in
life, hasn't he, Clem?

CLEM
(Getting teary.)
Yep.

DR. LARUTH
And doesn't that make you feel good
to help your brother, Cletus.

CLETUS
(Also getting teary.)
Yep.

DR. LARUTH
You can feel your bond growing
can't you?

CLEM
(More teary.)
Yep.

DR. LARUTH
A bond only two brothers can share.

CLETUS
(Very teary.)
Yep.

DR. LARUTH
Your brother loves you, Clem.

CLEM
(Crying outwardly.)
Yep!

DR. LARUTH
And your brother loves you, Cletus.

CLETUS
(Sobbing.)
Yep!

DR. LARUTH
You want to hug your brother, don't
you?

CLEM & CLETUS
Yep!!!

Clem and Cletus jump into one another's arm, crying and sobbing, saying things like "I'm sorry!" "Yer ideas a good one!" and so forth. Their sobbing becomes broad and loud as they grope one another. They start to drool en masse and become snotty as their weeping continues.

DR. LARUTH

Crying, weeping and hugging. My job here is done.

She exits with music (and another possible light change).

Clem and Cletus stand clutching each other. Their weeping has subsided to a quiet whimper. They part. Cletus reaches into his back and hands Clem a rock. They scan the sky.

CLETUS

Keek-keek ka-haw! Keek-keek ka-haw!

CLEM

Keek-keek ka-haw! Keek-keek ka-haw!

A pause.

CLEM (CONT'D)

Hope we git some crows soon. I'm getting' hungry.

CLETUS

Yep, ain't nothin' better than a big ol', fat ol', hot ol' crow.

(He looks sideways at Clem.)

'Cept maybe havin' sex with the cow.

They point at one another, getting the joke. They freeze.

LIGHTS OUT.

THE END