

MARGARET SIDES

PIERO

It was fun, this party. My first party in America.

(silence)

And the food was very good!

(silence)

This is joke, I make the food, so ... “the food was very good”. We make the food. Funny is very hard in English. Ah, you have the fizzy head, here, drink.

MARGARET

I don't have the fizzy head. I need to get back to work.

PIERO

You need to sit. *Margherita*, whatever was with Bo and *Signorina* Bennie –

MARGARET

I have no idea what you're talking about. Doesn't matter to me what either one of them does. Or doesn't do. With each other, or anyone else, or nobody at all.

He reaches out for her hand, she pulls away, almost in tears. He turns to leave.

PIERO

Allora ... I have something to tell you, but ... it can wait. It was nice to dance with you, anyway.

Margaret is about to speak when Bo walks in

PIERO

Ciao, Bo.

BO

Hey there, Piero. You gotta tell me what you put in that gumbo, it had a kick like a half-broke horse.

PIERO

Ah, you guess my secret. I talk to you later, maybe.

Piero exits.

BO

Maggie, we got things needs speakin on.

MARGARET

Bennie didn't make any eggs, why I expect her to I don't know, but each morning is a different day, like my mama says, and you can only hope for the best, so if you want to wait I'll have something up ...

BO

I never got a chance last night ...

MARGARET

I still have to get Mr. J's breakfast together, can you imagine, they want breakfast in bed, even after everything happening with their son, I don't think they've slept late in got to be 20 years—

BO

Maggie!

MARGARET

Did you lay with her?

BO

Pardon me?

MARGARET

Did you ... pollinate her? Did you have sex with Bennie?

BO

Not that it's none of your business, seein as how I'm a dead-end ranch hand and all and you don't care nothin bout me, but no. I did not.

MARGARET

At least do me the courtesy of telling the truth. You were hanging all over her last night.

BO

She was hangin all over me. Bennie gets all over everybody, that's how she does. Half the stuff she talk about ain't true, she likes tellin stories. Bennie likes people likin her.

MARGARET

Like you like her.

BO

I like her fine. But she's a baby. I ain't lookin for no baby.

MARGARET

Well, I ain't looking at all.

BO

(exiting)

Good, I heard you twice the first time. Why does everybody end up leavin this room angry?

Bo exits

Margaret raises her arm to throw her glass, freezes, puts it back down.

MARGARET

Me and my sister Mae would sit in this kitchen, babies hid invisible under this table, watching with wide eyes through the forest of big people legs, talking about their big people business. The magic of Mama's slim hand appearing over the heavy tabletop to conjure a carrot chip or stray flake of fried batter as we heard lord knows what coming out of their mouths, then we would slip out and fly like wild birds among the trees, giggling at all the words we didn't understand.

Mr. J. hates those trees. But we thought they were a fairy tale. Buds, and blossoms, and fruit, all on the branch at the same time? A miracle, and even a tree before flowering is a promise, one we knew deep in our young hearts, and we lived for that promise— of a hunger, of an ache for the future, of, yes, what Bennie said, of S.E.X.

(inhales sharply)

Oh! To be fifteen again and alive under a full moon, the air flooded with the scent, light and heavy everywhere, slipping in slowly from behind to trace ghost fingertips along our cheeks, our skin a-tingle like static lightning approaching, we'd breath in so deep there was no room left in our lungs for air. Wild little Maggie Perry ... with the Master's son.

Now, I don't feel anything at all. Been gone too long or not long enough, too old to believe in miracles. And God help me, I want to.