

CowGirls

A one act play

By Mildred Inez Lewis

In honor of the horse men and women of Compton.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

D'ANDREA: 23, African American. A member of the Women's Professional Rodeo Association.

LISETTE: 23, Latinx. A single mom and assistant manager at the local 99 cents store.

PLACE

A clean, but threadbare motel room at the Mustang Inn, in Compton, CA. The rooms are mostly rented by the hour. It's only amenities are a clock radio and small flat screen television. Its neon sign blinks erratically.

TIME

Now. Late afternoon between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

SCENE 1

IN DARKNESS: The sound of car stereos banging hip hop, R&B with a touch of nortena gives way to the sound of passing horses.

LIGHTS RISE: D'ANDRIA rushes into the room wearing a professional cowgirl outfit and sparkly cowgirl hat. She unpacks a gift bag of Wrangler clothing and bottle of tequila from her battered suitcase.

She turns on a country station. The music is quickly overwhelmed by a passing car's blaring hip hop.

D'ANDRIA

You win ...

(D'ANDRIA turns off the radio, freshens up, checks the time, fixes herself in the mirror. She looks at the time again. Pulls out her phone, texts, but no response. She finally lays on the bed and practices with her lasso.

LISETTE knocks. She wears a cowboy hat identical to D'Andria's. D'ANDRIA opens the door and they twirl and lift each other off their feet, like girls and lovers.)

D'ANDRIA

I wasn't sure you'd come.

LISETTE

My word's good. Welcome home.

D'ANDRIA

So ... ?

(D'ANDRIA twirls to model her patches, buttons and medals.)

LISETTE

Everyone wants to see you. They'd get a kick out of all this color.

D'ANDRIA

Next time.

(pointing)

Check this out, it's a Wrangler medal. Wait, here ...

(She hands the Wrangler goody bag to
LISETTE.)

D'ANDRIA

Wrangler swag for you and Tommy.

(LISETTE lays the jeans and shirts on the bed.
Our first hint that she doesn't plan on having
sex.)

LISETTE

He'll be out of these in three months.

D'ANDRIA

I'll win some more and send more.

(LISETTE holds up a pair of sneakers.)

LISETTE

Wrangler makes kicks?

D'ANDRIA

Made. They're leftovers from the men's circuit.

LISETTE

Who cares? At least I won't have to worry about anyone snatching them. They're not in style.

D'ANDRIA

They're still doing that?

LISETTE

You haven't been gone that long.

D'ANDRIA

How about I want to forget all the bullshit? Everyone trying to get over on everyone else.

LISETTE

Sucks.

(An ice cream truck drives by.)

LISETTE

Except for that.

(She runs to the window.)

D'ANDRIA

Noise pollution.

LISETTE

Magic.

D'ANDRIA

Doesn't even make sense. It's cold outside for LA.

LISETTE

It's a Michoacana.

D'ANDRIA

Whatever.

LISETTE

They've got duros, cueritos. You don't want fried shit, they've got fruit. Mango with chili lime! Let's grab some. We can catch them. They drive like two miles an hour.

D'ANDRIA

I like it when people buy stuff in stores.

LISETTE

Except when it's some fancy food truck, hunh?

D'ANDRIA

I guess.

LISETTE

Get out of here. I saw that shit on Instagram. You were on line grinning with the rest of them.

D'ANDRIA

Oh! That was some bomb ass grilled cheese. Never had anything like it before.

LISETTE

Looked like it.

(The ice cream truck drives by again.)

D'ANDRIA

They don't care how many times they go without a sale. They are not giving up.

LISETTE

They're just trying to make it. Like everybody else.

D'ANDRIA

I don't want my world to be that small.

LISETTE

Yeah.

(LISETTE starts packing the bag.)

D'ANDRIA

What're you doing?

LISETTE

Packing.

D'ANDRIA

Hang on a minute.

(She digs boots out from her suitcase.)

D'ANDRIA

Check out these shit kickers. They're yours.

LISETTE

I don't know. They look narrow.

D'ANDRIA

They'll fit. I traced your feet for the guy on paper. We went through every boot in the store until I was sure.

LISETTE

They're used?

D'ANDRIA

That way you don't have to break them in. I don't want you to get blisters. No pain.

(LISETTE nods her thanks.)

D'ANDRIA

That's it?

LISETTE

How grateful do you need me to be?

D'ANDRIA

I was hoping for a little more than gratitude.

LISETTE

I can't deal, D. This used to be a space where we could get away. Now it's ...

D'ANDRIA

The shoes prove I know you. Every part of you. If I went blind, I could still find all your soft spaces.

LISETTE

Wish I could say the same.

D'ANDRIA

You can.

LISETTE

You've got hard places in you I don't recognize.

D'ANDRIA
What're you talking about?

LISETTE
Nothing.

D'ANDRIA
Don't do me like that.

LISETTE
We're the same size. Keep them. You've got more use for them than I do. I don't know what cold really is.

D'ANDRIA
You're the one on your feet 10 hours a day. They're good support. Just try them. If you don't like them, I'll take them back.

LISETTE
Okay.

(D'ANDRIA dances LISETTE back toward the bed.)

D'ANDRIA
(sings "Buffalo Gals")
Buffalo gals won't you come out tonight? Come out tonight? Come out tonight?

LISETTE
Buffalo? You trying to tell me my butt's getting big?

D'ANDRIA
(sings)
Buffalo gal won't you come out tonight?

LISETTE
You're turning into a sure enough Okie.

D'ANDRIA
(sings)
And we'll dance by the light of the moon.

(LISETTE steps away and dances.)

LISETTE

(sings "California Love")

In the city of good ol' Watts. In the city, the city of Compton. We keep it rockin'. Keep it rockin'.

(D'ANDRIA gets behind Lisette and circles her waist as if they were riding.)

D'ANDRIA

Brown girls riding palominos down Avalon. Past low riders and cars so old como sí Cuba. Chickens and perros meeting in dirt alleys.

LISETTE

My poem.

D'ANDRIA

Safe up high. Riding past, over, around. With your girl. Me.

LISETTE

Air clear. No fear. Gangstas and drive bys in somebody else's movie. The boys from Brentwood and chicks from Calabasas playacting rebellion with our lifelines.

(D'ANDRIA finger snaps her applause.)

D'ANDRIA

You still go to The Townhouse?

LISETTE

That dump? Yeah, every Tuesday they've got karaoke and spoken word.

D'ANDRIA

What do you do with Tommy?

LISETTE

Compton's Mexican now, baby. You know we don't deal in sitters. We bring the kids.

D'ANDRIA

Great grandparents, aunties and the half dead.

LISETTE

If they can fit in the van, why not?

(D'ANDRIA kneels on the bed, moves seductively, then pats a spot for LISETTE.)

LISETTE

I've got to get back.

D'ANDRIA

You're still on lunch.

LISETTE

I need time to park. I'm assistant manager now. Can't be late.

D'ANDRIA

You didn't see everything. This is the gold I won in futurity.

(D'ANDRIA holds up a gold buckle.)

LISETTE

Futurity? There are sci-fi horses?

D'ANDRIA

The whole circuit feels sci-fi to me, Lis.

LISETTE

With you playing the alien?

D'ANDRIA

With me playing the girl running to her car before the good ol' boys get too lit.

LISETTE

At least you got out.

D'ANDRIA

Damn.

(LISETTE shrugs.)

D'ANDRIA

We had the same shot.

LISETTE

You got lucky. That's all.

D'ANDRIA

Wow. You got anything else to say?

LISETTE

How long've you got?

D'ANDRIA

I paid for an hour. The tour leaves in two.

LISETTE

I've got less than 20 minutes. So let's just talk about you. How was Waco?

D'ANDRIA

Fine, but I'm not going to Vegas. She only beat me by four seconds though. Next year.

LISETTE

Next year. So you're staying on the road?

D'ANDRIA

We talked about this.

LISETTE

You talked about it. We talked about making a family.

D'ANDRIA

How do you put together a family with nothing? Our only shot is to get out. That was always the plan.

LISETTE

I'm not leaving my family.

D'ANDRIA

Because they're soooo good to you.

LISETTE

Because they're my people. I'm tired of running. I'm not doing it any more. Come look.

(They look out the window.)

LISETTE

What do you see?

D'ANDRIA

Crap hotel. Crap neighborhood.

LISETTE

I see home. Ugly, beautiful, city, country.

D'ANDRIA

All this from a no tell motel.

LISETTE

Raj and his family keep this place spotless. Hard place.

(D'ANDRIA shrugs, unpersuaded.)

LISETTE

Compton's not special. Every place has a spot like this. Needs a place like this. Sheets are made to carry secrets.

(LISETTE picks up the bag.)

D'ANDRIA

Take this.

(D'ANDRIA slips a wad of money into Lisette's bra. LISETTE takes it out.)

D'ANDRIA

It's a love offering. Look I don't want to spend the little time we have arguing. I'm asking you to stay.

LISETTE

I came here to break up with you.

D'ANDRIA

Shit.

(LISETTE returns the money.)

LISETTE

Not to get further in.

D'ANDRIA

There's someone else.

LISETTE

No one, but Tommy.

D'ANDRIA

Swear to God I didn't see this coming.

LISETTE

All this obligation. It feels like a honey trap. I don't want it.

D'ANDRIA

How is money we both know you need obligation?

LISETTE

Can you hear me? This is what it feels like to me.

D'ANDRIA

I busted my ass to get you all this shit. I went without and was happy to do it. Am I a fool?

LISETTE

There's more than one way to be bought. You taught me that.

(LISETTE heads for the door. D'ANDRIA blocks her path. LISETTE slowly walks around her.)

D'ANDRIA

What we have is too deep to throw away.

(D'ANDRIA reaches behind her and grabs the lasso. She twirls it in the air and "ropes" LISETTE. LISETTE stops.)

D'ANDRIA

Say it's good to be able to shop without holding your breath for payment declined.

It is good.

LIVETTE

(D'ANDRIA kisses her.)

No.

LIVETTE

It's not sexy anymore?

D'ANDRIA

Not unless I ask.

LIVETTE

Are you asking?

D'ANDRIA

(LIVETTE pecks D'Andria's cheek.)

No.

LIVETTE

Screw this.

D'ANDRIA

I'm not dealing with the first half of that sentence.

LIVETTE

No, screw me.

D'ANDRIA

That used to get a laugh out of you.

LIVETTE

When things were still funny.

D'ANDRIA

This has been coming for a long time.

LIVETTE

D'ANDRIA

What else do you want? I'm texting. I'm calling. You can always find me.

LISETTE

But you're not here.

D'ANDRIA

Come with me.

LISETTE

And do what?

D'ANDRIA

Live. Breathe.

LISETTE

You don't make enough.

D'ANDRIA

So you get a job. One of those Internet work from home gigs.

LISETTE

What about Tommy?

D'ANDRIA

You can home school the rug rat.

LISETTE

I'd have felt a lot better if you'd called him our rug rat.

D'ANDRIA

Okay, our. Should go without saying.

LISETTE

Tommy's in Challengers club now. Choir. I finally got him straight at school.

D'ANDRIA

What about your moms? She's got room.

LISETTE

I'm not doing to him what they did to us.

D'ANDRIA

Now what?

LISETTE

You found your way out. I need to find mine. For Tommy and me. I got knocked up. You terminated. Reap, sow.

D'ANDRIA

Then reap again.

LISETTE

This is where I step off.

(LISETTE steps outside of the lasso.)

D'ANDRIA

So what's left?

LISETTE

I still have love for you.

D'ANDRIA

That's insulting.

LISETTE

I finally figured things out. You're the tumbleweed, a wind that sweeps in. My cowgirl.

(LISETTE grabs the lasso and twirls it.)

D'ANDRIA

You've been practicing.

LISETTE

I had to teach Tommy.

D'ANDRIA

Does he love it?

LISETTE

He needs it more than we did. The gangs are on him. Punks are after him.

D'ANDRIA

It never stops.

He's good for now.

LIVETTE

(LIVETTE pats D'Andria's shoulder goodbye.
D'ANDRIA crumples.)

Don't cry.

LIVETTE

You don't get to say that.

D'ANDRIA

You're still Auntie D.

LIVETTE

Not mom two.

D'ANDRIA

You've been on and off for two years. He doesn't think of you that way any more.

LIVETTE

Did you help that along?

D'ANDRIA

I wouldn't play you like that.

LIVETTE

You sure?

D'ANDRIA

It just happened with time. It got away from us.

LIVETTE

(D'ANDRIA chokes back a sob, then knocks
back a shot of tequila.)

D'ANDRIA

Then I'll be this person.

(D'Andria reaches for the bottle. LIVETTE
ropes D'ANDRIA and takes away the motel's
plastic cup.)

No.

LISETTE

Can we ... ?

D'ANDRIA

It's not a good idea.

LISETTE

Please.

D'ANDRIA

(LISETTE shakes her head 'no.')

I know it'd be the last --

D'ANDRIA

(D'ANDRIA dissolves into tears.)

Shhh. Shhh. Let's ride.

LISETTE

(LISETTE kisses the tears away. They slowly,
mournfully embrace for the final time as lovers.)

CURTAIN