

From White Buffalo
By Don Zolidis

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Winner of the Princess Grace Award in Playwriting.

CAROL, 40, worn out and exhausted.

ABBY, 18, her daughter. Spirited.

(A miracle birth of a white buffalo calf has occurred at CAROL's run-down farm in southern Wisconsin, changing her life entirely. After being deluged with pilgrims from around the world, including a phone call from the Dalai Lama, a mysterious businessman offers to buy the calf for two million dollars. In this scene, Carol is checking his references while Abby seethes nearby.)

CAROL *(into phone)*

Uh huh. Yeah. Yeah. I understand. It's just kind of a crazy thing, you know? So I just wanted to check. Right. Great. Thank you so much. You too.

(she hangs up)

ABBY

Well?

CAROL

It's legitimate. The bank vouches for him.

ABBY

I can't believe you're even considering this.

CAROL

Abby—

ABBY

Who is this guy? What do we know about him? What does he even want the buffalo for?

CAROL

He's an enthusiast on the subject.

ABBY

That's what he says, I mean, do we know that for sure?

CAROL

Well I've been checking him out on the internet—

ABBY

And nothing is ever wrong or misleading on the internet! Let's sign up!

CAROL

Look, he gave me the number of his bank account—they vouched for him—I found all kinds of stuff on him on the web—I mean, it looks good. It looks great. He's a major contributor to museums all over the country—

ABBY

Well what does he want to do with her?

CAROL

He probably wants to do what we're doing. Put her out in a field and let people come visit—

ABBY

What if he wants to skin her, huh?

CAROL

Oh come on—

ABBY

Sell advertising or charge people or find some way to make all kinds of money from this. The next thing we'll see her as a pitch buffalo for Nike!

CAROL

You're being ridiculous.

ABBY

I mean, think about it, the messiah is going to be owned. Can you understand that? Do you understand what that means? Everything gets co-opted—This is something pure, something purely believed in by thousands and thousands of people, and they're going to take it, he's going to market it, he's—

CAROL

He just wants to put her in a field!

ABBY

This is exactly what has happened to the native Americans time and time again—the white people move in, and as soon as they smell a whiff of money from it, they take possession—

CAROL

You're a white person!

ABBY

They carve faces of their presidents on sacred ground—

CAROL

What are you talking about? We are not in a Disney movie! He is not the Bad Guy! Okay? Why can't you be excited about this?

ABBY

Are you crazy?

CAROL

This is a good thing—

ABBY

How can you even say that? This guy comes in—

CAROL

And offers us two million dollars?! How is that wrong? Listen. Listen—You're getting your ideas from movies, okay? You're spinning all these wild paranoid stories about this—it is what it appears to be. He's a very rich man who is very interested in native American mythology—and maybe, who knows, maybe he is actually concerned about the safety of the buffalo. And he is going to help us out. This is going to change our lives. Is that so evil?

ABBY

If he were concerned about Hope's safety, he's give us money to buy a protective fence or something even if we didn't sell her. He'd help us, he wouldn't take her away. He wants her, Mom. I don't know why. Maybe he's going to lock her away—but I'm not paranoid here, I'm being smart. I don't like that guy, and I don't want his money.

CAROL

It's not up to you.

ABBY

Oh this is such bullshit.

CAROL

Hey.

ABBY

You said we were together on this—

CAROL

Abby—

ABBY

You said it—you said we were gonna make decisions together. And now you're treating me like a little kid.

CAROL

You don't understand—

ABBY

Just because I don't agree with you doesn't mean I don't understand.

CAROL

You understand, huh? Do you understand the difference between you going to college and being stuck here the rest of your life? I can't even afford to send you to the State University—I'm in debt up to my eyes... I have been poor my whole life! And this money, this money puts you in school, it lets me sell the place, it lets me start over. It could change the entire direction of our lives.

ABBY

Maybe I don't want my direction changed—

CAROL

You got into college, you're going to go—you are too smart—

ABBY (*overlapping*)

Why are you trying to make these decisions for me—

CAROL (*overlapping*)

You are *too smart* to be stuck here!

ABBY

Just because I don't go to college doesn't mean I have to be stuck living on the farm—

CAROL (*cutting her off*)

Abby!

(*She takes a deep breath*)

Do you understand that I can't support myself with this farm? I'm double-mortgaged, I have so much debt I can't ever leave—and I can't survive here without you. I'm stuck, okay? And if you left, if you left, I would drown. There's too much to do. That's why I can't send you to college no matter what it costs—I need you to live at home and help out just to make it. And I know—you don't want to do that. Hell, I don't want to be here. That's not fair to you—you deserve a chance to have your own life. If we sell the buffalo, there's enough money to get me out of debt and put you through Oberlin with room to spare. We would never have to worry again. And if I don't sell it, if I don't sell

CAROL (*continued*)

it—why—because I don't trust this guy, and then you can't go to school because of it? I don't care what you say, you're gonna resent me your whole life.

ABBY

If you don't sell *her*—

What? CAROL

Her. She's not an it. ABBY
(Pause)

It's a buffalo. Not a person. CAROL

You don't know that. ABBY

Is that what this is about? CAROL
(CAROL sighs deeply.)
She's just an animal, Abby. That's it. She just happens to be a different color.

There's more to it than that. ABBY

No there isn't. CAROL

You used to believe in her—before they offered you this money, you used to believe— ABBY

No I didn't. CAROL

Yes you did. ABBY

I believe she's a symbol. I believe it's neat that all these people see her as some sort of God— CAROL

But you don't believe in her? ABBY

What, that's she's gonna bring peace on Earth? Unity to all mankind? Oh come on— CAROL
don't be ridiculous.

ABBY

There's nothing ridiculous about it.

CAROL

You're telling me that that animal sitting in our field is going to bring peace on Earth? Over in the Middle East they're gonna hear about this and suddenly stop hating each other? That it's all going to end—like a dream... All the hatred in the world, all the division, all these crazy bastards blowing themselves up in buses and trains are all going to stop because of what? An animal in our field? An ancient prophecy that has no relevance to our lives!

ABBY

It has relevance!

CAROL

How? *How?* Tell me.

(Pause)

This is—myth. This is—a story. It's a fable. It's not going to save us. And yeah, it's pretty cool that it's happening here, but this isn't going to change the world. But that two million dollars sure as hell would change ours.

ABBY

You have no soul.

CAROL

Oh Jesus Christ—

ABBY

Hey—you know Mom, you know what? Fuck you.

CAROL

Hey. Hey! You *do not* speak to me that way!

ABBY

You *deserve* to be spoken to that way because you will not acknowledge that other people have other beliefs! And those beliefs are worth protecting and we have a responsibility—

CAROL

I am not responsible for them! I am responsible for you!

ABBY

Fine!

CAROL

Fine!

ABBY

Fine!

CAROL

Fine!

(Pause. They stare at each other like gunfighters.)

ABBY

I'm going to go write some pretty scathing things in my journal!

CAROL

You go do that!

ABBY

And you know what, I'm calling the Dalai Llama and I'm going to tell him that you suck, and that there's no enlightenment in this house, so he doesn't need to bother showing up, cause you'd probably sell him too!

(ABBY storms toward the door)

CAROL

You will thank me for this some day!

(ABBY stops.)

ABBY *(calmly and seriously)*

No. No. I won't.

(She leaves.)