

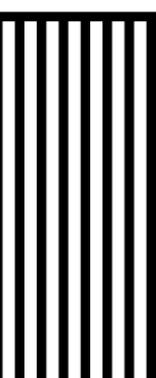


# FEATHERS AND TEETH

BY  
CHARISE CASTRO SMITH



DRAMATISTS  
PLAY SERVICE  
INC.



FEATHERS AND TEETH  
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FEATHERS AND TEETH was produced in a developmental production in Goodman Theatre's 2014 New Stages Festival and received its world premiere at Goodman Theatre (Robert Falls, Artistic Director; Roche Schulfer, Executive Director), Chicago, Illinois on September 19, 2015. It was directed by Henry Godinez; the set design was by Kevin Depinet; the sound design was by Mikhail Fiksel; the lighting design was by Jesse Klug; the costume design was by Christine Pascual; the casting was by Adam Belcuore and Erica Sartini-Combs; the Foley artist was Carolyn Ann Hoerdemann; the dramaturg was Tanya Palmer; and the production stage manager was Kimberly Osgood. The cast was as follows:

CAROL ..... Christina Hall  
ARTHUR ..... Eric Slater  
CHRIS ..... Olivia Cygan  
HUGO SCHMIDT ..... Jordan Brodess  
ELLIE ..... Ali Burch

## CHARACTERS

CAROL, 32. Coiffed like Farrah Fawcett.

ARTHUR, 40. A higher-up at one of the factories in town.  
Not the highest-up.

CHRIS, 13. Sullen.

HUGO SCHMIDT, 11. German.

## TIME AND PLACE

The play takes place in the spring of 1978, in a factory town in the Midwest. The stage is split between the very modern kitchen of an upper-middle-class home, and the crawl space under the house, directly below the kitchen. In the kitchen, there are wallpapered walls, linoleum floors, and a lot of wood paneling. There's a steel sink below a window with curtains. A table with three chairs is center stage. Stage right is the entrance to the house. Stage left is the door to the backyard. The crawl space below is just leftover insulation, some tarps and dirt.

## NOTE

This play is to be played a little broadly. The characters are just slightly larger than life. All of them (with the exception of Chris) probably wish that they were characters on *The Brady Bunch*. There might even be laugh tracks. They all proceed with the mindset that everything will turn out right in the end, until that becomes impossible.

# FEATHERS AND TEETH

## Scene 1

*Carol's real done up, for someone who's sitting in a kitchen on a weekday evening. She's got a pot roast in the oven. She smokes a cigarette and reads National Geographic. The front door of the house opens offstage. She perks up.*

CAROL. Chris?

*No response.*

Chris hon, is that you?

*Silence.*

Hon?

*Carol walks offstage and finds the front door open.*

Chris? You gotta remember to close the door when you come in, okay hon?

Chris? Hon?

CHRIS. OKAY!!

*Silence.*

CAROL. You got any schoolwork tonight?

I can help you with your schoolwork if you want.

*No response. The oven starts to smoke, she doesn't notice.*

Okay, well you just let me know if you want help.

I'm making a pot roast.

I just hope you haven't spoiled your appetite on hamburgers!

*Silence. A door slams upstairs. Loud music starts to play from a record player upstairs—a classic rock song like Led Zeppelin's*

*“When the Levee Breaks.”\**

*Carol smells the smoke, runs over to the oven and opens it. The pot roast is burnt, black. Unsalvageable. Smoke pours out of the oven into the kitchen. The smoke detector starts to go off.*

Oh, for crying out loud!

*She reaches into the oven impulsively with no mitts on. She burns her hands, lets out a tiny cry, then shoves her hands between her legs, determined not to scream. Very quietly—*

Jesus Mary and Saint Joseph the carpenter!!

*After the first wave of pain subsides, she removes her hands, looks at her fingers and blows on them gently.*

*She calmly gets potholders, removes the singed pot roast, and carries it out the back door of the house and hoists it out onto the lawn. She returns with the empty pot and places it in the sink.*

*She waves a tea towel in front of the smoke detector until the smoke dissipates and it shuts off.*

*The phone starts to ring. Carol answers it.*

Hello?

Good afternoon Mrs. Schmidt.

No, everyone is all right.

False alarm.

Just ruined a pot roast I'm afraid! Hahaha!

Sorry to have alarmed you.

All right.

You take care now.

Goodbye.

*She hangs up the phone, goes into the pantry, and retrieves a box of Hamburger Helper. Calls upstairs.*

Change of plans sweetheart. I'm going to fix up some Hamburger Helper.

*Silence.*

Chris?

Is that all right?

\* See special note on songs and recordings on copyright page.

*No response. Carol goes to the fridge and takes out a package of ground beef to start in on the Hamburger Helper.*

*Carol unwraps the raw ground beef. She dumps it into a metal bowl to start prepping.*

*Then she very furtively wads some of it into a little ball and eats it.*

*Suddenly, the back door opens and slams shut. The music from upstairs stops. A man with a moustache, in a brown polyester three-piece suit, hurries in. His hands and forearms are dripping in blood.*

Arthur!!!

What have you done ohmylord ARTHUR!!

ARTHUR. Now don't go getting excited Carol it's just a—

*Arthur starts to look around the kitchen for something. Blood is getting everywhere.*

CAROL. It's all over the kitchen now, Arthur! What have you done?

ARTHUR. I SAID IT'S NOTHING, CAROL.

I was pulling into the driveway and I hit—well, something got *stuck* under one of the tires and I tried to save it but—where's a bucket Carol?

CAROL. I just don't know what to make out of this Arthur. There's blood all over the floor.

ARTHUR. A bucket, Carol—

CAROL. I... I just did the floors this afternoon Arthur.

*Carol is paralyzed, staring at the trail of blood on the floor. Arthur sighs and grabs the scorched pot out of the sink. He goes out the back door.*

Where are you going with the—not the pot Arthur!

NOT THE POT!

*Arthur returns carrying something in the pot. It's heavy for something small enough to be carried in a pot. Arthur heaves it onto the kitchen table.*

WHAT ARE YOU DOING ARTHUR?!?!

I SAID NOT THE POT.

ARTHUR. It's still breathing. I couldn't just leave it there.

*Silence. There is a small, injured whine from inside the pot.*

CAROL. Well now. What is it then?

ARTHUR. It's dinged up pretty bad but ah, it's a possum Carol. We used to get possums out here all the time. Maybe a little possum. Or a squirrel most likely. I'm guessing it's either a possum, a squirrel, a little ferret, a fox, or a rat.

*Carol looks into the pot. She recoils in horror.*

CAROL. Oh NO Arthur.

ARTHUR. Like I said it's pretty dinged up.

CAROL. Oh Heavens Arthur.

ARTHUR. Nothing to be afraid of Carol.

It's just a possum, a squirrel, a little ferret, a fox, a rat or a...

Hold on a second Carol, are those feathers?

CAROL. A turkey maybe?

ARTHUR. Turkeys don't have—Oh for Pete's sake Carol—Turkeys don't have teeth. Like that.

*There is another whine from inside the pot, more urgent. And a desperate scratching sound.*

CAROL. Arthur, I think it's—is it scratching?

*More scratching. It's trying to climb up the walls of the pot.*

ARTHUR. Get me the lid, Carol.

CAROL. What!?

ARTHUR. Don't make any sudden moves Carol. Just get me the lid.

*Carol gets it together and hands Arthur the lid. The thing in the pot is still scratching and struggling to get out. Arthur creeps over to the pot and slams the lid down. There is an enraged snarl from inside the pot. It's struggling. Arthur has to really fight to keep the lid on.*

CAROL. Oh my oh my oh my GOD Arthur!!

*The thing in the pot makes one last attempt and then stops struggling.*

Do you think it's passed Arthur?

ARTHUR. Your guess is as good as mine Carol.

*There is a tiny whine from inside the pot.*

CAROL. Oh. Well I guess it's still... amongst us.

ARTHUR. Maybe we should take it to the veterinarian?

CAROL. Maybe we should just put it to rest. Because it seems like it's in pain.

ARTHUR. Not to worry Carol, I'll just run it right over to the veterinarian.

*Carol stares off, stoic.*

What?

CAROL. I think it might be an endangered species.

ARTHUR. Oh sweetheart, it's no danger to us.

Not in the shape that it's in, and not inside the pot.

CAROL. Well Arthur, it's just that... An endangered species is—I read about this in the *National Geographic*—an endangered species is when there's practically no animals left of a species. And I don't know exactly what this thing is, but I know I've never seen anything like it, so don't you think that maybe it might be endangered Arthur?

ARTHUR. Well then that's all the more reason for us to take it to the veterinarian Carol.

CAROL. Well here's just one small problem with that Arthur: According to the *National Geographic*, that son of a gun Nixon passed a law where if you harm an endangered species it's... well, you gotta go to jail.

ARTHUR. That son of a gun! They send you to jail Carol?

CAROL. Well, yes. I'm afraid that's the case. So.

*The thing in the pot whines again. It's really pitiful, painful to listen to.*

ARTHUR. It just shot out of nowhere before I could hit the brakes.

CAROL. Oh no. This is terrible.

ARTHUR. I'm so sorry Carol.

*Carol starts to cry in a really pretty way. Arthur goes to comfort her.*

CAROL. Arthur maybe could you—your hands still have the—

ARTHUR. Oh, right.

*Arthur goes to the sink and starts to wash the blood off his hands.*

That's strange.

CAROL. What is?

ARTHUR. It's not coming off.

CAROL. Use the Palmolive.

ARTHUR. I did. But it's...

*He sniffs his fingers.*

Sticky.

# FEATHERS AND TEETH

by Charise Castro Smith

2M, 2W

Home-sweet-home turns into a haunted house for thirteen-year-old Chris when Carol—her father's new fiancée—moves in. Struggling with the recent death of her mother, Chris is convinced Carol is evil, but she just can't persuade Dad. When a mysterious, potentially dangerous but kind of cute creature is found in the family's backyard, Chris assumes it's a sign from above to eliminate Carol once and for all. This imaginative, bone-chilling, and wildly funny play brings the notion of dysfunctional family drama to sensationally scary heights.

*"Smith proves herself to be a cheeky, subversive playwright with a keen ear for menace and humor. FEATHERS AND TEETH is three things: a send-up of classic family sitcoms such as The Partridge Family and The Brady Bunch... an innovative addition to the horror genre, and a disturbing metaphorical plunge into the scary mind of a teenager who may or may not be on her way to becoming a psychopath. ... The over-the-top bloodshed is hilarious... [until] you're whiplashed back into the realization that growing up—for all its sitcom-worthy absurdities—can also be genuinely horrifying."*

—TheaterMania.com

*"... unusual and... genuinely moving... Smith has drawn such a rich picture of a loving mother and a daughter who simply cannot imagine life without her best friend. That part of this piece is so well constructed and truthful, it only intensifies the horror-genre elements of the play. ... [In] FEATHERS AND TEETH, you feel both the softness of love and the bite of its loss. ... fresh, gutsy and disturbing."*

—Chicago Tribune

*"An oddball mashup of Hamlet and Gremlins... make[s] for amusing mayhem."*

—Chicago Reader

Also by Charise Castro Smith  
THE HUNCHBACK OF SEVILLE

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