

FEATHERS

a moment of truth

by Darren V. Michael

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CAST

BERNADETTE / “BIRDIE”

a young woman

MAX

a young man

SETTING

A bathroom. The morning after.

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A large fashionable bathroom. At lights up, we see the steamed glass door (or curtain) to a walk-in shower and the humming of a very happy young woman, BERNADETTE. We can see the shadow of her as she sings and dances to her own song. After a minute or so, MAX enters in his underwear. He moves to the sink and peers into the mirror. He seems invigorated from a great night sleep. He reaches for his toothbrush and toothpaste and turns on the water to brush his teeth. The moment he speaks, the singing and shadowy movement behind the steam stops.

MAX

(almost serenading her)

Good morning.

(Silence.)

I said goooooo moorning, Beautiful.

BERNADETTE

(nervously, with a slight giggle)

Max?

MAX

Well, yes, of course. Who else would it be? Good morning, Sunshine.

BERNADETTE

Oh. Good morning. My dad used to call me Sunshine.

MAX

Oh. Probably not the best image to create after last night, huh? Maybe, Good morning, lover. Or hot stuff. Or Bernie. Or --

BERNADETTE

Birdie. It's a nickname. I know it's not really short for Bernadette. I like Beautiful.

MAX

Oh, I thought the bartender called you Bernie. Sorry. Ok, good morning, Beautiful.

BERNADETTE

(still from behind the steamed door, a giggle)

Good morning, Handsome.

MAX turns on the water and begins brushing his teeth.

MAX
(with a mouthful of paste and brush)
Ah hoop yoo shloop woo? [I hope you slept well?]

BERNADETTE
Hmm? I'm sorry. Oh, did I sleep well? I did. Very. Thank you.

BERNADETTE turns off the water. The shower door (curtain) slide open slightly. She peeks out, looking for her towel. It's slightly out of reach. She looks over at MAX who turns and smiles sweetly to her as he continues to brush his teeth.

BERNADETTE
Are you going to be long?

MAX
(spits then)
Almost done.

BERNADETTE slides back into the shower, closes the door (curtain). MAX finishes brushing his teeth, rinses his mouth, then moves to the shower to join her with an impish grin. BERNADETTE grabs the handle of the door (or curtain) to hold it in place.

BERNADETTE
What are you doing?

MAX
I was going to join you, Beautiful.

BERNADETTE
No. Ummm, I'm not dressed.

MAX
(giggling a bit)
Why, yes, I know. That's most of the reason I was going to join you.

He attempts to join her again. BERNADETTE once again prevents the door (curtain) from opening.

BIRDIE

I would prefer you not....Sweetie. Max.

MAX

(confused)

Bernadette? Birdie? Is everything ok?

BIRDIE

(hesitantly trying to come up with a satisfactory answer)

Yes. Everything is...great. Fantastic. Awesome. I had a really great time last night. You know...the sex and all. The sex was great. And the company. You. You were...well...great. Amazing. Great.

MAX

Oh, well....great. I guess. But today, this morning? Not so great?

BIRDIE

No, you're still...well, I woke up this morning and you were lying there so peacefully. Just looking like a perfect man. So handsome. So warm. So damned gorgeous I wanted to take a bite out of you. But I thought after last night, I...well, after what we did...and did...and well, you know, the sex. The great sex. It was mind-blowing actually. I thought I would probably clean up, take a quick shower while you slept.

MAX smiles, incredibly flattered, even impressed with himself.

MAX

Oh, of course. Of course. Take a shower. My house is your house. What's mine is yours. Make yourself at home. You were amazing as well. I mean, you still are. That's why I don't want you to go. That's why I wanted to join you. I thought I would, you know, continue what we started last night. I always dreamed of this. Waking up, showering together. Never done that before. Thought this might be a nice first.

BIRDIE

A nice first? Maybe. Maybe not. I'm...hesitant. I'm not sure you're ready. I'm ready.

MAX

Hesitant? Ready? For what? I'm ready for anything, Bernadette. I thought last night was one of those rarities. I don't really bring women back to my apartment.

BIRDIE

(she peeks out again)

Oh, of course not. I wasn't saying, implying that. I'm not sure I'm ready. I really had a great time last night and I don't want you to get the wrong impression. I really, REALLY enjoyed myself. It was magical.

MAX

Magical. I'll take magical, but, it doesn't have to end. Let's keep it going.

MAX starts for the shower once more.

BIRDIE

(stopping him again)

What are you doing?

MAX

Joining you.

BIRDIE

Wait! Wait. Wait.

MAX

You don't want to?

BIRDIE

No, that's not it. That's really not it at all.

MAX

Come on, Bernadette. Beautiful. Brace yourself. I'm coming in.

BIRDIE nervously moves back into the shower. We see her shadow move to the back as MAX steps in. We see his underwear come off as he tosses them over the door (curtain) and turns to her. We now see their silhouettes.

MAX

Bernadette, I love --

BIRDIE

Yes?

MAX

Wh... Wh --

MAX screams.

MAX

What? What is that? What are those?!

Feathers. BIRDIE

Feathers?! MAX

I can explain. Wait. Before you freak out. BIRDIE

Feathers?! Feathers? What? Feathers?! You have feathers? Down there? MAX

The door (curtain) opens. MAX reaches out for the towel hanging outside the door, wraps himself in it, and jumps out of the shower.

Oh my god. Oh my god. Oh my god. MAX

(peeking out of the door, searching) BIRDIE
Could you hand me a towel please? I'd like to talk about this before you run out of the room screaming.

(not very convincingly) MAX
Run out of the room? Who's running? I'm fine. I'm great. The woman I just spent the best night of my life with, the woman who I had dreams of having the greatest sex of my life with after a night of having the greatest sex of my life, turns out to be half....?

MAX hands her a towel from another rack. BIRDIE wraps herself in one and steps out of the shower.

Swan. BIRDIE

Half swan? You're half swan. I had a one night stand with a swan. MAX

Half swan. "I had the greatest night of my life with a half swan" would be more accurate. BIRDIE
And I did too. It was just amazing, Max. Everything. The talks, the dinner, the dancing, the sex, just the connection we made.

MAX

No, yeah, it was nice. I guess.

BIRDIE

I guess? Now that you know this, it's nice? But before it was the greatest --

MAX

Well, look, it just took me by surprise that's all. I mean, I don't remember seeing....feeling feathers down there.

BIRDIE

They were there. I just thought you knew and you didn't care. Like you didn't mind that I was different. That what we had was more than that.

MAX

It was. It is. I mean, before...I thought you were like me. But not like me. Better than what I deserved even. I just....This is a lot to take in. You have to agree. I never expected feathers. I think maybe I thought you were different and things were going so well that I feared...I mean, my track record hasn't been that great with women and I tend to be a bit pessimistic. I thought, "You're going to blow this, Max. Look at this great, attractive, intelligent, funny woman. You two are hitting it off. Things are going so well. She said yes to coming back to my apartment. That means she may be into me. I have a shot here, at something. At some meaningless sex or a second date even better. Or something that I may be longing for, someone I could spend time with, cook breakfast for, shower with even. But you're going to say something wrong, Max. Or maybe she isn't a she. What if she's got a penis? And at some point, we connected and I didn't even care anymore. I thought ok. If she's got a penis, I'll deal with that. I can adjust even. Maybe. Maybe this connection is real. Maybe I'm gay. Maybe all of this confusion and fear of being alone or isolated is because I put up walls and restrictions. Maybe that's it. Maybe I should just go with it, you know. Maybe the hell with overthinking and analyzing. Just be you, Max. Just try and connect her. Have fun. Who cares? This person in front of me. We're starting a journey. And this connection doesn't happen for everyone. But it's happening now. I don't care if Bernadette has a penis. Or a vagina. Or both. I don't care." But feathers. I never expected feather. I expected human. Not swan. Not feathers.

BIRDIE

Half swan. I'm half human too. And it was the same for me. I felt that too. I didn't care if you were all human. I didn't care.

MAX

Is there some sort of stigma to being all human?!

BIRDIE

That's not what I meant. You didn't notice anything last night? Didn't feel anything?

MAX

No! I didn't, believe me.

BIRDIE

Maybe you did and it didn't matter?

MAX

I think I would have known if I had felt feathers.

BIRDIE

Are you sure? They are very soft.

MAX

I would know.

BIRDIE

You want me to go. I'll go. I understand. The feathers are a bit shocking.

MAX

Well, yes. Of course they are. Wouldn't they be?

BIRDIE

I wouldn't know, Max. I've never shown them to anyone before!

MAX

You wouldn't know? Oh. But you were so good. We did all sort of things. Really amazing things. How did you know what to do if...?

BIRDIE

Because I knew being like this was probably going to be a big obstacle to having sex. I thought I should research things. I read books, magazines. I've seen movies.

(embarrassed)

I may have watched a porn or two. I wanted to be good at it. You know, just in case.

MAX

Well, you were. The sex was...

BIRDIE

Mind-blowing?

(taking his silence for a "yes")

Oh good. I did it right. Phew. Because you were...well, you were "grrr" and "come here" and "take this!" and loving, sweet then rough and scary...and...phew. I mean PHEW! Let's just say you blew my feathers off. I had to take that shower. And cool off.

MAX

Thank you.

BIRDIE

So you want me to go?

MAX

I don't know. I have questions.

BIRDIE

Ok, ask.

MAX

I mean I don't want to offend you. I just don't know how to frame it, ask it.

BIRDIE

Just say it. Ask me anything. I'll tell you the truth.

MAX

Feathers...anywhere else?

BIRDIE

Nope. Just there. Everything else as far as I know is just like every other woman. Perfectly normal. Other women lay eggs, right?

MAX

What?

BIRDIE

I'm kidding, Max. No, I promise. No more surprises. None. I have feathers down there. But I fell for a guy last night and so I did it. It. I did it, feathers and all, and I held nothing back. I just wanted to be with him. I knew there would be that time, that moment when someone would know. I would have to choose to show my secret. And unfortunately it would be at that most intimate of times. The deed. The joining. The dirty dance.

MAX

What about checkups? Going to a doctor? Or gym class?

BIRDIE

Mom's a doctor. Doctor's notes.

MAX

Oh, well, if you're going to have feathers, that's convenient. And you were born that way? It's not contagious?

BIRDIE

Would that matter?

MAX

(after a moment)

No, not really. I guess not. Right at this moment I wish I had feathers.

BIRDIE

Aww, that is so sweet, Max.

She starts to move to him. MAX takes a breath and may even step back slightly.

MAX

Just a sec. Give me a minute.

BIRDIE

Max, I'm here. I have feathers. And you need to decide whether that's okay for you. Does that matter to you? I had feathers last night when you bought me that drink, when we talked about Hitchcock movies and how we both hate *Casablanca*, and I had feathers when we had sex last night on the kitchen table, in the living room, and in the closet and even in your bed. I have feathers. But I don't care that you don't have feathers. That you're not covered in them. When I was a kid, I actually thought that was going to be my Prince Charming. A giant swan with man legs, covered in feathers, wearing a crown, riding his white horse. That feathered Prince would be the one who liked my feathers. He would say "you're like nothing I've ever seen and that is why I love you." You don't have to be that prince, Max. I just wanted a nice date and maybe a satisfying night of sex. If there's more, then get in this shower with me. Feathers and all. Do you still hate *Casablanca*?

MAX

Yes.

BIRDIE

Do you still love Hitchcock?

MAX

Yes.

BIRDIE

Do you still want to read romance novels with me and reenact the hot scenes?

MAX

Yes, maybe. Yes.

BIRDIE

I'm going to turn on this shower, get in there, lose this towel, and finish what I was doing. You are welcome to join me. Do you still think the poetry of Maya Angelou is indulgent bilge and that Bruce Willis may be the most underrated actor of our age?

MAX

Yes.

BIRDIE eases into the shower and turns it on. After a moment, MAX steps in as well. Both towels are tossed out. We see their silhouettes slowly move toward each other.

MAX

(trying to give her something)

I once stole a Chuck Norris DVD from Walmart because I just had to have it but was ashamed to pay five dollars for it.

BLACKOUT

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