

A TOUCH OF GINGER- By Joe Hartman

MARJORIE

That was a rhetorical question.

CHRISTOPHER

Was it?

MARJORIE

Yeah. You couldn't tell?

CHRISTOPHER

I mean not really, but, oh, I don't know if maybe if you'd asked me....come on, help me out, what's a good example of a rhetorical, you know "Is the Pope Catholic?" "Does a bear shit in the woods?" Those are obviously rhetorical, but...

MARJORIE

Did your mom drop you on your fucking head when you were goddamned born isn't rhetorical to you? I mean, did your mom drop you on your head when you were goddamned born? Well did she?

CHRISTOPHER

No.

MARJORIE

So that doesn't sound like a rhetorical god damned question to you?

CHRISTOPHER

But if you didn't want an answer why did you ask the question.

MARJORIE

To make a fucking point Christopher. God damn it. Jesus, what is wrong with you?

CHRISTOPHER

I don't know, I...

MARJORIE

Rhetorical question! Rhetorical question!!!

CHRISTOPHER

Sorry.

MARJORIE

Now, go on and get out of here will you? Leave us alone. Leave me to this life, such as it is.

CHRISTOPHER

I can't Marjorie.

MARJORIE

But why not?

CHRISTOPHER

(slight pause, then under his breath)

Rhetorical?

MARJORIE

(simply)

no, real question.

CHRISTOPHER

Because I know what you're trying to do and it simply won't work. You could never make me leave you, because...because I love you.

MARJORIE

But I don't love you, Christopher! *(Her bitter pose is dropping, but she struggles to hold it)* I mean I can't, I can't. I won't... *(she's fighting it)* I don't...oh heaven help me I just don't know what it is about you. You're like some dog, some stray dog. You're like that dog from that crazy fantastical movie, with the little girl, and he won't stop following her.

CHRISTOPHER

Lassie?

MARJORIE

No.

CHRISTOPHER

The Wizard of Oz?

MARJORIE

No for Christ's sake, no.

CHRISTOPHER

Annie?

MARJORIE

Yeah. Annie. You're like that dog. He wouldn't leave her alone. But if you think I'm fucking Annie, you've got another think coming, you know? Do you think I'm going to take you home with me and give you a bath and have all my little orphan friends rally around you and scratch your tummy and shit? Cause I might. I'd love to say I wouldn't, but I don't know what it is about you. I just might.

CHRISTOPHER

If I lie down on my back will you? If I whimper like a little dog would you, like a little mutt, like a little stray scamp with a tin can tied to my tail?

She gets down on the floor with him.

MARJORIE

I just might, oh yes, I might. *(Getting into the fantasy)* Now, who's a good boy? Who is? Who's Mama's good good boy?

CHRISTOPHER

I is! I is!

MARJORIE

What?

CHRISTOPHER

I mean "Woof!" Rrrrruff, ruff!" Is that right? Is that good Marjorie?

MARJORIE

Oh, what's the use?

(Marjorie becomes crestfallen and starts to cry silently to herself.)

CHRISTOPHER

What, did I fuck it up? Did I ruin the moment? God, I'm always doing that. Why am I always doing shit like that? I'm a fuck up, I'm just, fucking it all, fucked it all right up. Fucked it up like fucking fuck soup, fucked that shit right up and stirred...

MARJORIE

No, no, no Christopher, it's not you. It's not. Don't you see? You're wonderful. A wonderful god damned soul in a world that wasn't meant for you. Or me. Two creatures like us? We're nothings. This world was meant for...for her. Things like her, beasts like her to stomp and tromp and crash about, treating pathetic humans like us as nothing but belongings. Maybe in some other world, some make-believe parallel universe, life is like those crazy fantastical movies in which people own animals as pets instead of the other way around, but not here. Not in Petagonia.

BOTH TOGETHER

In this world it's the animals that call the shots, and the people who belong to them.

(An unearthly sound is heard.)

MARJORIE

Christopher no! Your childish fit woke her up. You've got to get out of here. Now! She'll claw you to death if she finds you here.

(From off-stage)

GINGER

Meow, meow, meow, what the meow fuck is going on out here? I'm trying to meow fucking sleep, meow!

MARJORIE

See, see what you've done? You've awakened Ginger T Meowington the Third!

(GINGER enters).

GINGER

What the meow fuck is going on out here??

MARJORIE

Oh, Christopher it's too late. You fool. You fool I warned you. .

CHRISTOPHER

Maybe not. Not if I take my life into my own hands for once.

GINGER

(Noticing CHRISTOPHER)

What? What are you? How'd you get in here? Marjorie? Did you do this? Did you fucking do this? I'm trying to meowing sleep meow meow meow. Just for that I'm going to spank the shit out of you with this newspaper. That's what you get for disobeying me, I'll teach you a meowing lesson!

(GINGER grabs a paper and goes toward MARJORIE)

CHRISTOPHER

Get away from her! Leave her alone!

GINGER

Awwww shit! No you don't! You keep away from me you filthy human! I don't know how you got in here, but I can take care of you in a hot second.

(GINGER gets a horrific smile upon her face as MARJORIE and CHRISTOPHER stand agape. One by one her claws extend).

GINGER

You can't escape my claws of doom, you little pip squeak. Not that I would ever do anything to a pathetic little human, I mean, that would just be cruel. Nah, I'm just going to walk like this. *(She walks with her claws flailing in the air)* and if you get in my way, it's not my fault!!! I'm just minding my own meowing business!

(GINGER walks toward him, eyes on him and deliberately claws CHRISTOPHER's eyes.)

CHRISTOPHER

My eyes!! I'm blind! I can't...see!

MARJORIE

Christopher no! Didn't I tell you that two people like us, our lives aren't worth a hill of beans in a crazy alternate world like this!

(GINGER begins to laugh/meow in a villainous way, loving every minute of Christopher's pain as he staggers blindly about.)

CHRISTOPHER

You've got to do something Marjorie, you've simply got to. Not for me. No, and not even for yourself. Do it for love.

MARJORIE

For what?

CHRISTOPHER

For the power of love! Don't you love me?

MARJORIE

Yes Christopher, I can't say it, but you know... you know I do!

CHRISTOPHER

Well then do something! Anything!

MARJORIE

What can I do? All I have is this...

(MARJORIE pulls out a large poinsettia.)

MARJORIE

Poinsettia! It's perfectly harmless.

(GINGER is suddenly stopped cold. Every bit of focus she has goes toward the plant. MARJORIE notices and tests it by moving the plant about a bit, the cat's eyes follow.)

GINGER

Cant help myself. Every instinct is telling me, I must meowing eat that meow, meow, meow plant!

MARJORIE

(to herself) Wait a minute, I know what to do. *(to GINGER)* Here Ginger! Here Puss, puss, puss! Come to the plant, come to the plant...

(GINGER crouches, like a lioness, it's tail twitches, and just as Marjorie rolls the plant to one side, the cat leaps for it and begins to devour it.)

GINGER

So delicious. Can't help meowself.

(MARJORIE races to CHRISTOPHER where he has fallen and holds him tight to her chest.)

MARJORIE

Christopher. It's ok my darling. Everything's going to be alright.

CHRISTOPHER

What happened? I couldn't see, because I'm blind, you know. I could only hear.

MARJORIE

Well, I lured Ginger away from you with a poinsettia, because I've never known a cat who could resist chewing on any plant in the house, even though Poinsettias, while perfectly harmless to us, are...poisonous when eaten!

(GINGER has heard this and looks up from her plant.)

GINGER

What the meow?

(She begins to get woozy, and the whole world begins to distort and waver. Music plays, Light effects, until everything stabilizes and we see GINGER MEOWINGTON THE THIRD, an average cat asleep by the poinsettia batting at things in her sleep. Her owner MARJORIE comes into the room.)

MARJORIE

Oh my God! How'd that get in here? What? Christopher, come quick!

(CHRISTOPHER enters.)

MARJORIE

Did you bring that in the house?

CHRISTOPHER

Yeah, from the office Christmas party.

MARJORIE

Don't you know it's poisonous to cats?

CHRISTOPHER

Well, no I...

MARJORIE

That's a rhetorical question.

CHRISTOPHER

Sorry.

MARJORIE

I just hope she hasn't eaten any of it. Ginger. Ginger, wake up Baby.

(GINGER awakes)

GINGER

Meow?

MARJORIE

Oh, thank God she's ok. I'll just get rid of this.

(She drops the poinsettia into the trash and begins stroking GINGER under her chin.)

MARJORIE

Did that bad man try to kill little Ginger? Did he? Did he now?

CHRISTOPHER

Of course not. I didn't know is all. I've never had cats before.

MARJORIE

I thought everyone knew about Poinsettias.

CHRISTOPHER

You're apparently looking at the only one who didn't. But anyway, do you know what I did do? I made dinner. Your favorite. Shephard's Pie.

(CHRISTOPHER exits and comes back with plates of it.)

CHRISTOPHER

One for you and one for me. A nice piping hot plate of...

MARJORIE

What's the matter?

CHRISTOPHER

I have no idea how she did it, but that fucking cat of yours coughed a hairball into my shephard's pie.

(GINGER looks at him and then, satisfied turns around and goes to sleep).

MARJORIE

Ah, quit yer bitching and eat your dinner. I mean after all, you know what they say...everything tastes better with a touch of "Ginger".

Lights out.