

**THIS COW AND THAT TROMBONE**  
A 10-Minute Comedy

### Cast of Characters

<u>EFFIE:</u>	Female. A cow who is content.
<u>SUZIE:</u>	Female. A cow who wants more.
<u>BEAU:</u>	Male. A bull who is empathetic.

### Setting

An open pasture of grass where the farmer's cattle graze. A trombone sits on the grass. There are other human artefacts: perhaps a shovel, a metal bucket, half-filled glass bottles, and more. All the artefacts are percussive.

### Time

Early summer, early morning

### Playwright's Note

Although the animals in This Cow and That Trombone are animals, they are anthropomorphized and don't walk on all four legs. They move like humans. The costumes shouldn't be fully realistic – just something to suggest “cow” or “bull.”

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At Rise: A trombone sits on the grass. There are other human artefacts: perhaps a shovel, a metal bucket, half-filled glass bottles, and more. All the artefacts are percussive.

(LIGHTS UP.)

(EFFIE and SUZIE enter, with EFFIE eating grass. Neither see the trombone.)

EFFIE

... and maybe that's why you don't give milk yet, Suzie. You're always wishing and worrying. You should be content, like me. Then you'll give milk, and maybe it won't be sour.

(EFFIE moos with delight after eating some grass:)

Mmmmoooo ... good grass.

SUZIE (in her own thoughts)

Is it?

EFFIE

Eat the grass. Enjoy the sunshine, drink the water. Poop. Sleep. Give milk. That's what you have to do. What does a herd need with a dairy cow who doesn't give milk?

SUZIE

Maybe there's something more.

EFFIE

Here? Look around this farm. There's a lot of grass and a lot of sky, and not much "more."

(EFFIE gently laughs.)

Besides, you couldn't handle it. You get butterflies in your stomachs as it is.

SUZIE

That's mean.

EFFIE

You're right, I'm sorry. But it's true: You couldn't. None of us could.

(EFFIE moos with delight after eating some grass:)

Mmmmoooo .... tall fescue with orchard grass and hints of clover. Plus, I'm picking up traces of ryegrass and meadow brome. I love having 25,000 taste buds, don't you?

(SUZIE doesn't respond.)

I'm not trying to be mean. We're cows. We can only have so much.

SUZIE

Maybe.

(EFFIE smiles and approaches the trombone without seeing it.)

EFFIE

“Maybe.” There’s no one like you, you’re such a dreamer. Sometimes I wonder --  
(EFFIE sees the trombone, screams, points, and raises a general ruckus.)  
Help! Help! Oh no, oh no, oh no ...

(SUZIE moves to EFFIE, hurriedly.)

SUZIE

Effie, what’s wrong?

EFFIE

Snake! Snake!

SUZIE (looking around, concerned)

Snake?! Where?!

EFFIE (pointing)

There, there! Long, curvy, metal snake!  
(As SUZIE approaches the trombone:)  
Stomp it, stomp it! Kill it, Suzie, kill it!

SUZIE (tapping the trombone, kindly:)

I don’t know, Effie.

EFFIE

Look at its jaws! They’re open, it’s ready to strike! Sure, it hasn’t moved so maybe it’s dead, but what else can it be? Stomp that snake!

SUZIE

It’s a trombone.

EFFIE

Trombone snake! Trombone snake! Kill it!

SUZIE

No, it’s just a trombone. It makes music. You blow air into it there –  
(SUZIE points to the mouthpiece.)  
And you move that up and down.  
(SUZIE points to the slide.)  
And the music comes out there.  
(SUZIE points to the bell.)

EFFIE (puzzled)

How do you know that?

SUZIE

Farmer Calvin sometimes plays a trombone in the pasture. But his is silver. I listen, sometimes. It sounds nice. And it looks like it would be fun to play.

(SUZE pantomimes and vocalizes playing a trombone.)

EFFIE

So, this is a people thing?

(SUZIE nods.)

It's not a snake?

(SUZIE shakes her head. EFFIE approaches the trombone and kicks at it.)

SUZIE

Don't do that!

(SUZIE picks up the trombone and carries it away from EFFIE.)

(BEAU enters in a hurry.)

BEAU

I heard a scream. Where's the snake? Oh, Effie.

(BEAU steps away from EFFIE. He sees SUZIE holding the trombone.)

Whoa, nice trombone.

SUZIE

Thanks, Beau.

BEAU (impressed)

Farmer Calvin plays one. It makes music.

EFFIE (dismayed and disappointed, not angry)

What are you doing?

SUZIE

I don't know.

BEAU

Where did it come from?

SUZIE

I don't know.

EFFIE

How can you hold it?

I don't know. SUZIE

Why is it here? BEAU

I don't know. SUZIE

It doesn't belong here. Put it down. EFFIE (approaching SUZIE)

You'll kick it. SUZIE

Yes, I will. EFFIE

Then, no. SUZIE

It isn't for you. EFFIE

It could be. I could make music. SUZIE

Cool. BEAU

(BEAU improvises a few beats of a recognizable tune, any genre.)

Don't encourage this. EFFIE (as she slaps BEAU's shoulder:)

(BEAU winces. To SUZIE:)  
You can't make music. This is not your "something more."

It might be. SUZIE

No. You have hooves, you can't move that thing. EFFIE  
(SUZIE demonstrates moving the trombone's slide with her hoof.)  
Your lips can't fit that thing you blow into.

SUZIE

My embouchure.

BEAU (impressed)

Whoa, French.

(EFFIE glares at BEAU, who shies away. SUZIE inhales deeply and puckers her lips as if she's ready to blow into the trombone.)

EFFIE

Don't you dare, Suzie. You can't!

SUZIE

Stop saying can't.

(SUZIE blows into the trombone. It makes a little noise, like a breeze blowing through a tube, but it isn't music.)

Oh.

(SUZIE tries again to play the trombone, more desperately. Nothing comes out. Nor the next time. Nor the next. She looks at the trombone, embarrassed and confused. She puts it on the ground.)

EFFIE

Are you finished?

(SUZIE nods, looking away.)

I am trying to protect you. It isn't just your lips or your hooves. It's everything.

(Increasingly strident and caustic:)

You are, we are cattle on a farm. We eat and drink and sleep. We *work*: We birth calves, we give milk. And at the end, we get turned into quarter pounders with cheese.

(SUZIE and BEAU grimace.)

That is our life. We don't get "more." We aren't people. You aren't people.

(Pause. EFFIE exhales and calms down.)

That thing isn't a snake. But that doesn't mean it isn't dangerous. Show me how to pick it up.

SUZIE

Like this.

(SUZIE picks up the trombone. EFFIE takes it and starts to exit.)

What are you doing?

EFFIE

I'm just going to hide it where it can't hurt anyone. Somewhere no cow will find it. Eat some grass, it'll cheer you up. Maybe thistle. That's got a nice peppery taste.

(EFFIE exits and SUZIE watches. After a few moments, metallic crunching noises come from the direction where EFFIE exited.)

(SUZIE is shocked. She turns away from where EFFIE exited. She looks dejected.)

BEAU

And that's why some of the herd call her "Bossy."

SUZIE

She's bossy, and she's right.

BEAU (gently)

Well, I thought you had something good going on there. You looked so natural holding it, like you had done it all your life.

SUZIE (dully, not looking at BEAU)

No, it was my first time.

BEAU

And when you puffed out your cheeks to blow, you looked like a pro.

SUZIE (ibid)

No. I have never done that.

BEAU

But when you blew into that trombone, the sound –

SUZIE (same, looking at BEAU)

What about it?

BEAU

It was awful.

SUZIE

IT WAS MY FIRST TIME, BEAU, I'VE NEVER PLAYED THE TROMBONE BEFORE AND I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT I WAS DOING AND YES, IT WAS AWFUL I'M SORRY THAT I WAS SO BAD AND IT WILL NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN.

BEAU (gently)

Well, that's good. It's good you're giving up after trying just once. If you can't be great at something immediately, what's the point? Like walking. Remember the first time you walked? Perfection.

SUZIE

I stumbled a lot until I learned what to do. I mean, my legs are four feet long. It took a while to figure them out.

BEAU

Oh, right, good point. Well, the first time you ate in the pasture went great, didn't it.



SUZIE

A skunk sprayed me. Then two more. Then I fell into a puddle. Everyone called me “Stinky Suzie.” I learned to avoid that part of the pasture.

BEAU

Oh, that’s right. But what about that time when –

SUZIE (flatly)

You’re trying to make me feel better and help me realize no one is perfect the first time they try anything new, that they need to learn in order to improve and if they keep up their hard work they can achieve their dreams no matter how big and, frankly, stupid they might be.

BEAU

Whoa, you got it in one.

SUZIE

But here’s the thing, Beau. Two, actually. One, I don’t want to feel better right now. I want to feel lousy; I want to pout and call myself names. I want to cry about a world that makes cows think that “enough” is alright and that we should feel ashamed to want more.

BEAU

And the second?

(SUZIE points in the direction EFFIE exited.)

SUZIE

That trombone is a pretzel. I’ll never play again. I’ll never make music.

BEAU

So, Effie was right? We can’t have more?

SUZIE

No. Go away. Please.

BEAU

Okay.

(BEAU exits the direction EFFIE exited.)

(SUZIE hides her face for a while. She moos. She bellows and stomps her hooves without thinking. POUND, POUND, POUND. She is out of control. The stomping and bellowing take a while.)

(SUZIE stomps her hooves again then bellows again with a bit more control. POUND. POUND. MOO. She stomps more without bellowing. POUND. POUND.)

(Then SUZIE notices something. She stomps her hooves again, but deliberately in a short rhythm. POUND POUND-POUND POUND. She claps the hooves of her front legs in a longer rhythm. CLAP CLAP-CLAP CLAP CLAP. CLAP CLAP-CLAP CLAP CLAP.)

(She claps her hooves and moves around the pasture, stomping! CLAP-CLAP-CLAP POUND-CLAP-POUND. She comes across a half-full glass bottle and taps it. PING. She taps the bottle and pounds her hooves and claps! CLAP-CLAP PING PING POUND PING-PING CLAP.)

(There's a shovel, a metal bucket, and other human artefacts that are percussive in the pasture. SUZIE taps and hits and claps them: overlapping, getting softer and louder, speeding up and slowing down in a whirlwind variety of rhythms. It's music. SUZIE is making music.)

(As SUZIE makes music, BEAU peeks his head in to watch. He smiles. After a few moments, he enters but he stays away from SUZIE. He moves his body to the beat of her music, sometimes mooing in appreciation. Perhaps other cows and bulls enter the pasture, following BEAU's lead. Perhaps there's mooing from off stage as they listen and appreciate SUZIE's music. SUZIE notices BEAU and faces him, making music.)

(After BEAU has been listening for a bit and nodding along, EFFIE enters, bewildered. She listens to SUZIE's music, she watches BEAU's movements. SUZIE sees EFFIE and nods, defiantly, while still making music. EFFIE's hooves starts tapping in rhythm to SUZIE's music, which she doesn't realize at first. But when she does notice; she's surprised and a little ashamed.)

(SUZIE continues to play, PING-PING TINKLE CLAP POUND POUND PING, until she finishes with a flourish, exhausted. BEAU applauds. There is clapping from the herd. EFFIE turns to BEAU.)

EFFIE

How can she want what she doesn't know?

BEAU (still clapping)

Seals balance beach balls on their nose even though aren't any in the Arctic. And chickens? They aren't born with cue sticks in their coops, but they always win at billiards. So cows can make music.

SUZIE

And bulls can dance!

(BEAU does a few dance moves. SUZIE plays  
a few rhythms in accompaniment, then applauds.)

EFFIE

So. Some cows want more and they find it. While others live the life they are supposed to live in  
the place they are meant to be.

SUZIE

But, maybe, along the way they also use their 25,000 taste buds ...

BEAU

To invent new foods!

EFFIE

Huh. Bluegrass ice cream?

(EFFIE moos with delight as she ponders this:)

Mmmooooo .... I like it!

(Beat.)

So what does a herd need with a dairy cow who doesn't give milk?

SUZIE

I can think of a few things.

(SUZIE plays more music. BEAU dances. EFFIE joins in the dance.)

(LIGHTS DOWN.)

(END OF PLAY.)