

A CHANGE IN NATURE

By Jeff Dunne

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## CHARACTERS

### RACCOON

One standard issue raccoon that has been trapped by wildlife control, and who thinks he (or she, with one pronoun change) is being interrogated.

## SETTING

A dark stage, the actor presumably behind bars that the audience can't (or at least doesn't need to) see.

SCENE

*(Completely black/blank stage. Actor is pacing back and forth, anxious. Suddenly, he or she turns and notices the audience.)*

RACCOON

What are you looking at, huh? Staring at me like those bars'll protect you. They won't, you know. Come a little closer. I'll show you.

*(Stares at the audience.)*

Smart move. I've ripped apart bigger and stronger than any of you. Oh, yeah. That's right. You think you're so tough, with your tranq darts and stun guns. You know it took three darts to put me under. Three! That's right. And even then I managed to mess up two of you pretty bad.

Oh. Oh oh oh. You didn't know that, did you? I can see it in your eyes. Yeah, you. Putting on a brave face, but I can see your pale little hands shaking. You thought you were gonna just stand there beyond those bars, stand there and study me like some animal in cage? Some afternoon entertainment? Well think again, pal. I'm not gonna dance for your amusement.

*(Turns away, but a few moments later turns back.)*

Wait! Wait. Don't go. I'm... I'm sorry. I mean, I still think you're an ugly mess that would look better with a few scratches on your face, but... even talking to you is better than being alone again. Trapped here.

I don't have the patience to be in a cage. I was meant to be free. Free to go wherever I want. Free to *do* whatever I want. Ohh, and I did. I don't mind telling you...

Hey, what's your name? Bahh, it doesn't matter. I wouldn't remember it anyway. I think I'll just call you... Lunch. Yeah. Lunch. That's a good name.

Well, Lunch, do you know what freedom is? Do you? I mean really? No bars, no rules. Just you, the trees... the wind in your fur.

*(Looks out at the audience again.)*

Not that you have any worth mentioning. You know, I bet that's why you're all so uptight. If you hadn't lost all your fur, you'd know how to relax. It's okay, though. I'm not judging.

You just can't know what it's like to go anywhere you want, to wander ar— Okay, yeah, I'm not gonna lie. I am judging you a little. I mean, be honest. What the hell happened to you all? Did you chew it off or something? Did you get caught in some kind of contraption? Because I need to be honest with you. *We* need to be honest... with each other. *You*... look like idiots. You're an embarrassment to the whole animal kingdom the way you strut around like you own everything, and you can't even grow a real coat. Honestly, how you make it through the winter is beyond me.

Wait! Wait wait. Don't go. I didn't mean to make you feel bad or nothing. Truth is, I feel kinda bad myself. I do. I mean, I know what I do is wrong. I know it's stealing. Truth is, though, I... I just can't help myself. I mean, you leave all this great stuff out and you expect nobody to come and take it?! What's the matter with you? If you don't want me to come and go through it, you should keep it inside, or bury it, or something.

You think I'm the criminal here, but the truth is, it's *you* that's the problem. That's right, you heard me. I may go through your stuff at night, but I'm not the one leaving things around. I don't put all my worldly possessions in big silver cannisters and those green plastic things. It's entrapment, I tell you. Entrapment!

What? What!?! Why are you staring at me like that? What? Have I got something on my whiskers? Where?

*(Cleans off face.)*

Did I get it? You're still staring at me. *Why* are you staring? *Why?* *Why* why why!!? Alright, damn it! Enough! I did it! I admit it! I admit everything! I took it! I took it all! Every garbage can on the entire block! It was all me! There! Are you happy?! I confessed. I *did* it...

*(There's a pause, then...)*

But...

It wasn't *for* me. It was for... my family. I did it all for the kits. All forty-seven of them. You wouldn't let your kits go hungry, would you? I mean, family's everything, right? You know what that's like. And... and... can I share something with you? Six of them I don't even think are mine. I mean, she tells me they're mine, but... they smell funny. You know what I mean. I mean, you can tell. Do you know what that's like? Knowing that six of... six of... your kits... aren't...

*(Breaks down into tears, hiding face. Part of the way, stops crying and looks to see if the audience is still watching, and then resumes crying even louder.)*

You have to know how bad I feel, how much I regret everything I've done. I know it was wrong. I know I just let my stomach get the best of me. But you have to know that I've changed now. I'm not the raccoon I used to be. I've grown. Here. In this cage. I see things in a new light. I know how to control myself, and I promise that if you just give me one... more... chance... I can show you that I'm a new—

*(There is the sound of food, either a can being opened or dry food being poured into a dish. The raccoon stops suddenly, alert and totally fixated on the sound. A devilish smile burst through, and attention is then turned back to the audience suddenly.)*

What was I... Oh, right. New raccoon. Right. I'm a saint now. Really. Blah blah blah trust me blah blah okay, gotta go!

*(Exits, and lights out)*