

RABBIT SUMMER

by

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SCENE SET UP

It's close to the end of scene 3. Ruby has just asked her best friend since childhood, Claire, to find a new place to stay to mourn her dead husband after Claire accidentally shared some harmful secrets with Ruby's husband, Wilson, with whom Claire has mostly only shared animosity. In an attempt to smooth over the rift between the women, Wilson offers a bright side to the grieving widow of a cop shooting.

CLAIRE

You have a positive spin for everything, huh?

WILSON

There's nothing wrong with living on the bright side.

CLAIRE

Who is it for?

WILSON

I don't know.

CLAIRE

Yes you do.

WILSON

Stop.

CLAIRE

Who?

WILSON

For my mom I guess.

CLAIRE

I like your mom.

WILSON

You remember her?

CLAIRE

From the wedding. She looked so proud. I wished I had someone, anyone, who was proud of me like that. Finally got it when I met James.

WILSON

Mom's the reason I'm a cop. She worked for CPS--advocated for children like a warrior. I wanted to follow in her footsteps and protect the innocent. That sense of duty has driven me my whole adult life. I guess it's what makes me so...

CLAIRE

Annoying?

WILSON

Positive.

CLAIRE

Potayto, puhtahto. (*potato, potato*)

WILSON

My sense of duty must be failing me. It wasn't enough to make my wife feel comfortable growing our family.

CLAIRE

You know how white guilt makes good white people say dumb shit to prove they aren't bad white people?

WILSON

Of course.

CLAIRE

You're doing the same thing, Wilson. Black men are seen as aggressive and threatening and overbearing and over libidinous, so you're denying your own truth just to not fall into that--

WILSON

You a shrink now?

CLAIRE

I'm your wife's oldest friend.

WILSON

Best friend.

CLAIRE

We'll see. And I'm a woman.

WILSON

Have you told that to your t-shirt?

CLAIRE

Fuck you, Wilson. *(They share an easy laugh.)* It doesn't have to be true, you know.

WILSON

Sorry, kid, that outfit does nothing for your girl parts.

CLAIRE

Not that, po-po.

WILSON

What then?

CLAIRE

That you're acceptable only when you're the exception to our race, not the example of it.

WILSON

I'm the example of the exception.

CLAIRE

Sorry, dude. Not mutually exclusive. I've got a dead husband who got shot by a white cop. I'm a recognizable statistic. Example? Exception? Shit, what I do know is, me and rage, we're real good friends right now. But you don't have that freedom. You're a cop who knows that a broken taillight could get you killed. You're the victim and the oppressor, trying to be neither. How do you deal with that?

WILSON

I *am* neither.

CLAIRE

I wish everybody knew that. (*A moment. Regret maybe. Hope definitely.*) What's going on in there?

WILSON

I was thinking about the day Mom told me the chifforobe was mine.

CLAIRE

When was that?

WILSON

Two years ago. I went into her bathroom and cried.

CLAIRE

Aw.

WILSON

A little bit! No awww. I didn't *cry* cry.

CLAIRE

There's no shame in it.

WILSON

Felt like a bitch.

CLAIRE

Are you one?

WILSON

Nah, that's my-- That's Reggie talking. Those were good tears, man.

CLAIRE

Good for you. Don't be ashamed.

WILSON

I'm not.

CLAIRE
Good.

WILSON
Don't repeat it though.

CLAIRE
Stop it.

WILSON
Seriously, if you tell anybody, I'll deny it.

CLAIRE
Relax. I owe you.

WILSON
For what?

CLAIRE
Another chat not rife with dead husbandisms.

WILSON
Happy to oblige.

CLAIRE
Have you ever gotten in it?

WILSON
Gotten in what?

CLAIRE
The chifforobe, that back piece, to see what it's like. The waiting. To step inside that reality for a moment and wait for freedom. Have you gotten in it?

WILSON
Hell nah I ain't get in it. That thing's... (*gesture for "tight"*) and I'm... (*gesture for "swoll"*)

CLAIRE
Get in.

WILSON
I don't want to damage it.

CLAIRE
Take your shoes off.

WILSON

This piece means everything to me.

CLAIRE

Not yet.

Claire rushes to the chifforobe, Wilson in tow. She opens the doors while Wilson removes his slippers. They unload the coats and Wilson grabs the screwdriver and removes the trick back wall to reveal an arsenal of guns. Machine guns, hand pistols, assault rifles. Large guns sit upright on their butts. Smaller ones hang from a pegboard. Aghast, Wilson carefully removes one, checks if it's loaded. It's not. He removes a few more. They seem endless. Claire watches, very ill at ease. After a long silence, Ruby enters, showered and dressed, and takes in their discovery. She waits for words. No one has any. The tension breaks (or escalates) when Wilson's phone rings in his pocket. He answers, full of fake fineness.

WILSON

Hey, baby girl! This isn't our normal phone time. Everything okay? *(an indictment)* Your mother did a number on you talking about those scary things, huh? Daddy doesn't want to hear you upset. Can you listen to Daddy? Listen. Everything's fine. No one here's upset. That's not how we do. No, auntie Claire is fine. Your mother's fine. Yes, I'm sure. Daddy's fine too. As always. I'm sure, Keisha. Everything is perfect.

Blackout. Intermission.

4. BLACK LIVES SHATTER: A MOVEMENT

Later. Coats are in. Guns are out, mostly. Wilson collects them into a bag/box. This scene is played with no air until indicated. The urgency to be heard is at its peak.

RUBY *(to Claire)*

I've been trying to tell you.

WILSON *(to Ruby)*

Fuck her.

CLAIRE

Excuse me?

WILSON

Not like that, but yeah, fuck her, you should be telling me.

CLAIRE *(to Ruby)*

Tell me what?

RUBY

I was going to tell you before I went upstairs, but we got sidetracked--

WILSON

By *me*? You stopped cuz I came down?

RUBY

So I was going to tell you at the hotel.

WILSON

When were you going to tell *me*?

RUBY

I was planning to tell you eventually, babe--

WILSON

Eventually?

RUBY

But our conversations around this have always been so anti-gun // and I was waiting to find the right words. /

WILSON

// Because we're anti-gun!

CLAIRE

/ What the fuck were the right words?

RUBY

Okay, there was this meme that said--

WILSON

There was what?

RUBY

A meme. You know.

CLAIRE (*to Wilson*)

Those viral pictures with quotes and--

WILSON

You desecrated the sanctity of my family legacy behind some comic strip?

CLAIRE

Not exactly a comic strip.

RUBY

Never mind. Forget the meme.

WILSON

I can't forget the meme. The meme got my house feeling like a fortress of terror.

RUBY

I'm not a terrorist.

CLAIRE

Are you sure?

WILSON

Got a damn arsenal in my family heirloom. Feels like some terror to me.

RUBY

I didn't know where to put them.

WILSON

Somewhere else!

CLAIRE

Why are they here?

RUBY

The meme said "One failed attempt at a shoe bombing and we're all shoeless in the airport, but forty-one school shootings since Columbine and there's no change in gun regulations." Something like that.

CLAIRE

I've seen it.

WILSON

And?!

RUBY

And I'm thinking about James and all the others who've been shot this year alone--

CLAIRE

All the other *who*? Because victims of gun violence and victims of police shootings are not the same. We've been through this.

RUBY

If you Google gun laws and consider the meme it--

WILSON

We are suburban Black people. We don't do guns!

CLAIRE

What does this have to do with James?

RUBY

I looked at stats about guns and Black people in this country--

CLAIRE

Never mind. I'm not participating in this insanity.

RUBY

It's not insane. This other meme said "If Americans really want a change in gun laws, Black people just need to start buying guns en masse."

WILSON

I'ma need you to leave me alone with these memes, Ruby. You got assault rifles in a life giving piece of my family history. Turned Henry's secret compartment into a magazine warehouse.

CLAIRE/RUBY

Homer.

WILSON

Whatever!

CLAIRE

This sounded smart to you? Blacks collecting guns?

RUBY

Worked when the Panthers did it even though it wasn't their intention. Governor Reagan began restricting gun laws at the insistence of the NRA. You know they have never had interest in supporting the gun rights of Black Americans.

CLAIRE

I don't need a Civil Rights lesson.

RUBY

You need change. That's what I want to give you.

CLAIRE

What's going to change, Ruby? The fact that I lost my husband? Being a widow? You can't be this dumb.

RUBY

White people won't tolerate niggers with a whole lot of weaponry. Action will take place. No matter how passive we are with the guns. No matter if we claim, like the white folks, to be collecting, hunting or protecting our homes, they are not going to let us to build arsenals. That will be a problem for them. // And it will get something done in Congress.

WILSON

// It is a problem for *me*!

CLAIRE

Do you know how crazy you sound? My husband was shot by police.

WILSON

How was this supposed to work? How were you going to show the man his wrongs without getting our entire family, entire neighborhood shot up in the process?

RUBY

We weren't going to take to the streets brandishing the weapons like lunatics. The point was--

WILSON

Who is *we*? Whose guns are these? They can't all be yours.

RUBY

They're mine and a whole lot of other people's. They belong to an organization I joined.

WILSON

Whose are they?

RUBY

People who care about this country, its safety, the safety of its children--

WILSON

You and a bunch of gun toting criminals are talking about safety?

RUBY

We're not criminals. The guns are all legally purchased over the course of almost a year now.

WILSON

A year?!

RUBY

Not these. I only joined two months ago. Began storing these here last month.

CLAIRE

My God.

WILSON

Who owns the damn guns?

RUBY

After James was shot and that school shooting happened days later, I panicked. I had to do something. I couldn't sleep. Do you remember my nerves just before--

WILSON

Get to the guns, Ruby.

RUBY

We all contributed to get the guns: white, Black, Asian, everyone. But only the Black members make the actual purchases. They're all legal and registered. That's the point. We're not hiding

it. We want them to know we're collecting. Just like them.

CLAIRE
Omigod.

RUBY
When the local NRA catches wind and starts using their blood money to get Congress to add restrictions, maybe I won't feel sick to my stomach that you took my birth control pills.

CLAIRE
Omi-- You're going to cost him his fucking job.

RUBY
We're not breaking the law.

WILSON
Storing guns owned by other people in our home?

RUBY
With their permission. It's a touch precarious, but it's not covered in the Ohio statutes so technically it's not illegal.

CLAIRE
You are a piece of work. If I were your husband, I'd be on the verge of tears right now.

RUBY
My husband doesn't cry.

CLAIRE
Yes he does.

WILSON
Shut up, sweatpants.

RUBY
No he doesn't.

CLAIRE
Maybe not in front of you, Huey Newton.

RUBY
What does that mean?

WILSON
Nothing.