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The Rabbit Died - PART TWO

Warning: this thread contains scenes involving body horror, death, gore, reproductive abuse, and vomit.

The table is set, roast chicken, stuffing, carrots. Mom even made sweet potatoes with the little marshmallows for you. You still like them, right? She dumps a scoop of them onto your plate, smiling. You nod, you do.

The corners of her eyes crinkle as she serves you some stuffing. You stuff a forkful of sweet potatoes into your mouth. Sweet on sweet, you squeeze your eyes shut to keep from crying. You missed these, you missed her.

"You shouldn't lie."

You turn your head to the creature sitting at the head of the dinner table. A figure made of milk, a crown of antlers rests on her brow. She twists a fork into a slice of chicken breast.

"I don't like it when you lie."

"Damn it." You set down your fork and rest your head in your hands. "Yeah, of course, this is a dream. Could you, could you wait a minute before you start saying weird shit? I want to enjoy this."

"Take your time," the creature says.

You shovel in mouthful after mouthful of sweet dream potatoes. Mom chuckles, "I didn't realize you were so hungry. I would've made more!"

"It's okay, Mom," you say, "This is enough."

Plip, a drop of milk falls from the creature's fingers as she reaches for a crescent roll.

Mom pushes the basket closer to the creature. You watch her take one, tear it open, and smear the insides with potato.

"You used to do that," Mom says.

Your appetite leaves you.

"Hey, Mom? Hey, whatever-the-fuck you are."

The creature shrugs her shoulders. "You'll name me eventually," she chirps. "These are good rolls."

"I made them from scratch," your mom says, offering her another. She holds the basket out to you next. "What's on your mind, sweetie?"

You stare at the basket. It's weaved out of IV tubes pulsing with saline. Mom holds it aloft, expectant.

"Go ahead," she says.

You take a roll and pick at it. "I'm scared."

She smiles. "Scared of what?"

"I don't know."

"That's okay." She butters her roll with a scalpel. Her sleeve falls down enough to show her wrist, and you look away. "I'm scared, too. For you."

The creature shoves chicken into her runny mouth.

"Why are you scared, Mom?"

Sighing, she pushes aside her plate, now a surgical tray, and folds her hands on the table. "You're in trouble again and I'm not around to help you. I can only watch from where I am."

You drop your gaze down to your lap. This always happens, you fuck up, and your mom suffers for it. Even in your dreams, she suffers. "I'm sorry, Mom. You don't need to worry, you shouldn't worry, I'll be okay."

The creature scoffs.

"What's your fucking problem?" you spit at the creature.

She holds her hands up and leans away from the table. Her brows, faint lines etched in white, arch high. "How can you say you're going to be okay? You don't know that! You don't even know where you are right now."

"I'm at dinner, stupid."

"Hazel!" Your mom taps a knuckle against the table. "Don't be rude!"

You rub your nose. "Sorry, it's just that she started it."

"I'm going to die," the creature whispers, her head in her hands. "You're a huge idiot and I'm going to die because of it."

"Stop being dramatic, no one's going to die."

The creature growls, her liquid skin rippling away to bare crowded teeth. Big incisors, sharp fangs, what an absurd combination. You laugh at them.

"Go ahead," she grabs the end of the table cloth. "Keep laughing."

She yanks away the cloth, taking the meal, the trays and scalpels along with it. The table underneath, you scream when you see it. Adams and Lucy twisted together, their yards of guts weaved into a slab.

Your mom cries, and you, you keep screaming. A hot, wet hand lays on your shoulder, soaks into your shirt, and you look up. It's her, the creature, it's her and her touch burns.

The creature smiles down at you. "They look pretty dead to me."

You wake up.

You rub the crust from your eyes as they adjust. You're reclining in the passenger seat of a car, the back tilted as far as it can go. It's Adams's car, you used the keys to swipe it from the Clinic's parking lot, and you have been driving for days. Many gray, terrible days.

Patient #5 sits on the driver's side. She clutches the wheel, hands at ten and two, and flinches at every passing car. You fix your seat, yawn, and open your seat belt to readjust it. The car beeps in protest and #5 twitches in unison.

You snap belt back in place. "Sorry."

"You were laughing in your sleep," she says. "Was it a good dream?"

"Yeah. It was great."

Your stomach cramps.

"Jesus fuck!"

Patient #5 shoots you that look, that flat, knowing look, and blows the hair away from her eyes.

You prop your feet on the dashboard. "This is bullshit, how does any of this crap even work? How does a fucking fetus know when I'm lying? How did a fucking fetus even get inside of me?"

"I told you already," Patient #5 says.

"You didn't tell me anything. You said a bunch of I-don't-sleep-I-dream shit, and started crying for an hour." You dig at your wristband to distract from the cramps.

"We almost crashed into a potato truck."

"Let me try telling you again! Without crying."

"Find a place to park first, I don't want to die."

Patient #5 makes a sharp turn into the breakdown lane. You screech like a startled bird and grab at the roof handle, holding on until the car comes to a rough stop.

"Sorry," she says.

"I'm going to die," you mutter, "You're a huge idiot and I'm going to die because of it."

She cuts the engine, apologizing. Lots of apologizing. You want to tell her to stop saying sorry, but it won't do anything. She'll only apologize for apologizing.

"Spill it," you tell her.

"It--" You catch the gleam of her big eyes cutting towards you. Then, whimpering, she looks back to the road. "It's the food they fed us. Dr. Adams told me the Clinic had special food from Maine."

"You can't get pregnant from food." You cramp, and you punch the door. "How the fuck is that a lie?"

"Chimalman had Quetzalcoatl after she swallowed an emerald. Whose says you can't have a baby from a lobster dinner?"

"We didn't have lobster."

No cramps this time.

"Okay, so, we didn't have lobster. What we ate was special, Adams told me." She rests her chin on the steering wheel. "I believe him."

"You believe that?"

She gives a sheepish nod, her bottom lip sticking out. Her eyes are already glistening with tears.

"You know what I believe?" you ask. "I believe Adams lied to you. He fed you a crock of shit, he probably drugged us and turkey-bastered us in our sleep."

The cramps knock the air out of you. Whatever is causing them, magic fetus, magic food, magic brain bullshit, socks you hard in the gut. The seatbelt pins you, keeping you from doubling over and crying.

"I know it sounds like bullshit, but it's real!" she says. "Believe me."

The following things are true: Adams and Lucy puked themselves inside out and you cramp every time you lie. The roofie theory should be true, too. You should be right about this, and yet, your womb and the tiny terror contained within continues to pummel you.

"I believe you," you lie to end the conversation. You lie to trick your body.

Your body will not be fooled.

"You need to stop lying," Patient #5 says as she watches you squirm. "Say it again and mean it."

"Fine!" You scream, snorting back a line of snot hanging from your red nose. "Fine, fucking fine! I believe it! I believe you! I do! I do!"

The pain is yanked away. There and then not, you gasp at the relief, at the sweet warmth flooding you. You wipe your face, you cry.

"Are you okay?"

You can taste your mom's sweet potatoes and marshmallows.

"I don't know."

Patient #5 lays a hand on your shoulder. You don't shirk it off. "What do you want to do now?"

"I want to know more," you say.

"Like what?"

"I'm pregnant, right?"

Patient #5 bobs her head in agreement.

"Then what the fuck am I carrying?"

"A special baby," she says, "That's what Adams said. That we're going to have special babies, and not to think too hard about it. We're to feel blessed."

"I don't feel blessed."

The headlights of a passing truck sweep over the car and the two of you sink down in your seats. Coast clear, you drum the dash. "Why did Adams tell you any of this?"

Patient #5 bites the steering wheel. She whimpers, "I--I slept with him."

You scrunch your nose as you picture Adams naked. Tall, gawky, he appealed to you as much as a plucked ostrich. "You slept with that dickhead?"

"Y-Yes."

"Oh, honey. No. That's fucked up."

She sniffs, "I'm sorry."

"He explain how this special food works?"

Patient #5 grinds the heel of her palm into her eye. The tears have started falling,

cutting trails down her round cheeks. She can't be that old, you realize, watching her. Eighteen, nineteen at most.

"No," she says.

"Hey." You lean over to give her arm a gentle cuff. "You said you wouldn't cry."

She fights back a messy sob, "I'm sorry."

"You don't need to be sorry, just don't cry. Please."

"Oh, okay."

"You don't know how the food works, but do you know where it's from?"

"I told you, Maine."

"Where in Maine? Did Dr. Daddy tell you where it's shipped from exactly?"

She blows her nose in her sleeve, thinks. "A dairy farm."

"A dairy farm in Maine." You drum louder on the dash, eyes straight ahead, staring deep into the night. "Maine has more trees than people; it shouldn't be hard to figure out which farm."

"I guess."

You look at her and she flinches. "We're going to Maine."

"Sorry?"

"We're going to Maine," you speak slow, "We're going to Maine, and we're going to figure out what the fuck was in that food. We're going to figure out what the fuck I'm carrying."

Patient #5 starts the engine. "I'm carrying one, too."

She could be carrying Adams's little ostrich egg as far as you know. You pop your tongue, nod, "What we're carrying."

A look crosses her face, fear, maybe, concern, possibly. It scampers away quick, like a deer from a gun, or a rabbit from a wolf.

"To Maine," you say.

"To Maine," she repeats.

You rejoin the open road, off to your destination.

END PART TWO.

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