



 rabbit, rabbit, rabbit  @therabbitdies

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## The Rabbit Died - PART SIX

Warning for abuse (emotional, physical, reproductive, & sexual), cannibalism, death (animal & human), violence, & vomit.

Honestly, this part could go into gross, uncomfortable territory, please read with caution.

Your name is Hazel Rey. You like your name as much as you like yourself, which isn't much. You are trapped in a cabin stuck in the middle of who-the-fuck-knows where. You used to think you were clever, possibly even smart. Now, as you sit alone by the window, you know better.

You are a fucking idiot.

Patient #5 won't talk to you. Though, you haven't tried talking to her since Cody dragged her inside. That fucking creep, he carried her like they were newlyweds on honeymoon. Fuck that guy, you're sick of him!

You rest your chin on the window sill and groan. Woundwart, he's coming. You need to warn Patient #5. You need to--

"Ugh, fuck this!"

What good will it do, this is your fault! You and your stupid mouth, you cursed out a meat monster and now he's coming to kill you.

Woundwort is coming to kill you; Cody, whoever the fuck he is, he might kill you, too. Sit and wallow, it won't do anything. Fucking do something!

You are in a cabin stuck in the middle of nowhere. There has to be something here that can help you. And Patient #5, talk to her.

Patient #5, you lost track of her during your pity party. You push away from the window, stretch and take a quick inventory of your surroundings. First floor, open space, living room and kitchen. Antlers hang above the fireplace.

No Cody or Patient #5.

Playing with your wristband, you head to the stairs. The steps dip under your feet,

and the railing has a give to it. A breeze fans over your body as you ascend, hot, moist air. You pass frames, hung askew, and think of bones lodged in a great throat.

You squeeze the railing and it pulses, it throbs. The blond wood blues around your fingers. Oh fuck this, it's alive. You release it and dash up the remaining stairs, jumping the last two altogether.

"Fuck." You rest against a wall to catch your breath.

"You really need to cut out all that fucking swearing."

Cody sits down the hall, long legs stretched across the floor, feet barring a door. He idles with his gun--a revolver, now that you have a good look at it. You sneer, he probably thinks it makes him look like a badass.

"You looking for your girl?" he asks, he twirls the gun. He stops it, spins it clockwise and stops it again.

"Yeah," you say.

"She's in the bathroom."

"Thanks."

He tosses the gun up in the air and catches it, and back to spinning. Spin, stop, spin, stop. You screw up your face as he switches hands.

"Need something?" he scratches his scar with the barrel. "You're staring."

Shoot yourself, please. "You look like a toolbag."

"And you look like a cunt, you need anything else?"

You chuckle, he isn't the first man to call you that, and he won't be the last. You hope. Need to watch the backtalk, or he might do worse next time. "The staircase--what's wrong with it?"

"It's alive," he says.

The stairs yawn and hot air blasts your back. You stumble away, almost tripping over Cody's legs. "Why?!"

"It's a security measure. If any uninvited guests try to use them--" He holds up his hands, fingers crooked, and snap them together. "Crunch."

Living stairs, those could be useful. Lure Woundwort up them when he comes, and chomp, bye, bye motherfucker. Could you turn them on Cody?

"That's--that's good to know."

Metal kisses your ankle and you look down. Cody, lids low, runs the gun's muzzle up along your shin. "Got any more questions?"

"Any--" you gulp as the gun skims your knee-- "Anything else here alive?"

"The fire in my lions," he drones. "Go talk to Quintana. I'm getting bored."

Quintana? Is that Patient #5's name? Cody knows her name while you don't? Your face burns as you ask, "Where's the bathroom?"

He bangs his boot heel against the door his feet have been resting on all this time. "Hazel's coming in. Play nice."

The door opens on its own. Living stairs, living doors, and what else, the whole house? You enter the bathroom. The inside is cozy if a little humid. Clean floors, clean sink, clean walls, it's a world away from the bathrooms you knew.

Patient #5--Quintana? She doesn't look like a Quintana to you. She soaks in the clawfoot tub, fully clothed, arms folded on her knees. Her long hair floats around her in a dark, coiled spill.

"You always take a bath with your clothes on?" you ask.

She winds a lock of her wet hair around her fingers. The water is pink, tinted from blood and filth. A faint trail of red crust runs from her nose to her chin. "My clothes are dirty. Thought I'd wash them, too."

"That fucker hurt you?"

"He shook me, and he yelled at me." She looks up at you. "He apologized, though. I don't know if he meant it, but he apologized."

You doubt Cody meant it, but you can argue his honesty later. There are more pressing matters at hand. "There's something I need to tell you."

"I have something to tell you, too!" She perks up. "After, you first."

"Right."

How to start explaining all this? You grip the tub's rim and kick at the bath mat.

"I have dreams." You check to see if Quintana is listening. She nods and you continue, "I have dreams with this weird milk creature - she says she's my baby."

"They started when we left the Clinic, at least, that's when I started remembering them. I don't know, it's fucked up. We're having dinner and--"

Quit fucking stalling, Hazel, speak up! Stick to the basics, tell her what she needs to know. Tell her about Woundwort.

"Woundwart."

A wet mass plops down by your feet. Startled, you draw away. Quintana giggles, "It's just my shirt! Keep talking. You said Woundwort?"

"Yeah, Woundwart."

"Woundwort."

"That's what I said."

"You said WoundWART." Quintana raises her legs and pulls off her pants. Then, humming, she dumps them over the side of the tub. "It's WoundWORT."

"Fucking hell," you grumble, "Okay, Woundwort. He's the guy behind all this shit. The Clinic, Adams, the food, he's behind it."

"How do you know this?"

"He, ah, he stopped by my dreams and we had a nice chat." Cramps, mild but still fucking annoying. You slap the tub. "Fucking lie detecting, narc fetus. Woundwort came to my dreams and I called him out. Told him that I'm going to kick his ass."

"Oh."

"And he's coming for me. He's coming for us." You trail off, your hand right on your wrist, scratching.

Quintana sinks down until her chin is touching the water. She presses her steepled fingers to her nose and purses her lips. If she started yelling, you wouldn't blame her.

You let her ruminate, your own thoughts wandering down the crooked parts of your memory. A wave of viscera, a voice that crept on insect legs, how much of that was real and how much of it was your dream? You smell green grass and grow nauseous.

"Inlé," Quintana says.

That's a word. You arch a brow at her as you wait to learn whether or not it's a good word or bad. She rises up, sloshing dirty water around the tub, and wets her lip. "I called someone, too," she says, "Not to fight, but to come help. Her name is Inlé."

"How'd you manage to do that?"

"The phone outside, I hung it up and it rang and when I picked up, she was on the other end." Quintana soaps her hair, lock by lock. "She said she will help us."

"And you believe that? You believe a random stranger on the phone will come and save us like some fucking knight in shining armor."

She lets her hair slip from her fingers, the wet strands clumped together into thick tendrils. Her face, for once, is still. "I do."

"Well, I fucking don't." You push away from the tub and stand before the sink. The mirror reflects your scowl back at you, repulsed, bitter. When did you become so ugly?

"You believe that Woundwort is coming to hurt us, why can't you believe the opposite of Inlé?"

"No one helps strangers. Not without wanting something in return. And--" you spread your hands-- "And how would she even find us? We don't even know where we are."

"How is Woundwort going to find us?"

"He just is."

"Hazel."

You turn on her, bristling, fist raised and ready for a fight. "He just fucking is! That's how it works - the bad things always find you first, never the good. And by the time the good things do decide to show? It's too late to do shit."

Quintana crams into the back of the tub, arms crossed over her breasts, her pinky between her teeth. She glares at you, and you, unflinching, return it. "That," she says after a time, "is really cynical."

"You're fucking cynical," you mumble. The baby yanks the leash, punishing you for your sarcasm. You bang your fist against your belly. "Will you cut it OUT!?"

"Hazel, no!" Quintana cries, aghast. "Don't do that!"

"Oh, fuck you." Flipping her off, you slam open the bathroom door and leave. You have a "fuck you" ready and loaded for Cody, too. In case he makes a smartass remark when he sees you. And you're itching to pull the trigger.

Only, he isn't out in the hall.

His spot on the floor is empty, abandoned. Without a target, your anger retreats, leaving you to stand alone in the hallway. What the fuck is wrong with you?

The bathroom door closes with a slow, creaking swing. Then another door further down shuts and locks. You dismiss it - they're alive. No use jumping at every strange occurrence, you have a pity party to rejoin.

Three fuck-ups in a row, you laugh at your new record. Quintana was trying to give you hope and you spat on it. You sit down on the floor, under a set of antlers hanging on the wall. "I'm such a cunt."

A hand lays on your face, delicate, coated in thick mucus. It cups your chin.

You tilt your head up.

There is a girl, no older than you, leaning over you from behind. You follow the path of her arm, up her shoulder, along her chest, and come to a stop at her waist. There is nowhere else to go except for the wall.

You shove away from her hand.

She is PART of the wall.

You twist onto all fours, palms slapping the floor as you attempt to crawl away from the girl. The wood goes soft under you, and it sucks at your fingers. You scream and wrench your arm free, pulling up strings of amber slime along with your hand. It's sticky, like sap.

Squelching, tearing, you hear the girl move. You roll into your back, sit up. She wades closer to you, the wood paneling rippling around her. She smiles, fangs and buck teeth. Antlers. Those were on the mantle when you came into the cabin. They were on the wall when you sat down.

She catches on something within the wall and frowns. You shiver on the floor, gasping, fighting for air as she struggles to continue. She lets out a small sound, a tch, and drives her nails under her antlers. Her skin splits from the cuticles down to her hips.

You would think you would be numb to all of this, whatever the fuck this is. But as you watch her step out of her skin and leave it hanging from the wall like a spent chrysalis, you decide, no, fuck this. You're not numb, you're far from it. And you flop down, stunned useless.

The tears start on their own, dripping onto the floor, into your pooled hair. You bring your sticky hands to your face and weep. What else is there to do? Run? Scream?

"What's wrong?" the girl mocks, hunkering down before you. She pries your hands away, her bare muscle and tendons working against your wrists. Tender wires of meat, fragrant with blood. "Are you scared?"

"Yes!" you scream it, kicking at the slick floor. She pins you by the wrists with a single, soft hand, and pushes up your shirt with the other.

Your belly is exposed.

She holds her hand over your stomach and lowers her face to yours. "Good. I want you to be."

"What have I done to you?!" You wriggle as she grazes your belly with her nails. Her hand has you pinned, a rabbit in a snare. Can't anyone hear you? Quintana, Cody, where are they?

"What have you done to me?" the girl asks. "What have you done? You. Hit. My. Sister."

You scramble to assemble your thoughts. Her sister? You haven't hit anyone other than yourself. You hit your--belly. You hit your belly. You hit your baby.

Antlers, fangs, bunny teeth, is she--? Could she be--?

"You're related to my baby?" you ask.

Globs of opaque jelly bleed and spread from her exposed muscle. She becomes human in patches. Pink-white skin, pale hair - an albino.

"She's my sister." She flattens her hand on your belly as if to soothe the child within.  
"You hurt her."

You go still.

"Yeah," you say, "I did."

The girl's lips go tight. Her eyes are the same round shape as your baby's. The color is different, powder blue instead of dark. "Give me a reason not to take her from you. Give me a reason not to kill you."

A reason to keep the baby, a reason to stay alive, you possess neither. The bitter poison inside you, bottled in your hear, roils. You're a surrogate, you never intended to keep the baby in the first place. Fuck that thing, and living? Have you ever wanted to live?

The floor swallows your hands and gulps your arms down to the elbow. Your captor swings a leg over yours, straddling you, and pushes your shirt up to your neck. She has a scar on her throat, it's the width of your wristband.

Your mom had scars like that on her wrists. Bracelets of shining pink, she never hid them. You caught her rubbing them on the nights your father stayed out late. She would smile at you. Don't worry, Hazel, everything is okay.

Your side stings and a numbness creeps through your torso. The girl, she did something, oh fuck, what is she doing? Your breathing labors. She flicks her thumb over your belly and the skin splits open.

Give her a reason not to kill you.

Give her a reason to let you live.

You have none.

"I'm sorry." Your mom is gone, you snapped at Quintana, you hit your baby, you keep messing up. You keep making these shitty mistakes, and all you can do now is say, "I'm sorry."

The girl, halting, asks, "What did you say?"

"I'm sorry." It's hard to breathe. Is that fat coil of yellow she's holding your bowels?  
"I'm sorry that I'm a fucking bitch, I'm sorry that I hit my baby, I'm sorry I'm negative, I'm sorry."

"I'm sorry that I can't think of a reason to live."

The girl sighs and lets her shoulders droop. She drops the loop of flesh she's pulled from you. "Pathetic."

She examines her hand, shakes the fluids from it, and murmurs something. You can hear your organs shifting, gurgling, your belly splayed open wide.

"I'm sorry," you repeat, "I'm sorry."

"I know," she says, "Now go to sleep."

She closes your eyes with a sweep of her hand. You plunge into white, screaming static, and suck in air. You can breathe, you can feel! You float down, down, deep down, until your feet touch a wooden floor.

The dining table is set.

You're in the dream.

You plunk down on the floor, cross-legged, and look up at the endless white. A girl crawled out of the cabin walls and sliced you open like a frog in science class. The floor sucked your hands. You saw your own intestines. You almost died.

You could still be dying.

You sniff and wipe at your running eyes and nose. You could be dying right now, and this is the layover between life and the hereafter. You have fucked up so much. You didn't even get a chance to apologize to Quintana.

A ball rolls by.

You smell warm apples and cinnamon. Cider.

"Hello?" you shout through cupped hands, and get up on one knee. "Baby? Hello? You out there?"

The ball bounces off the table's leg and rolls back towards you. It comes close enough to grab.

You lean forward to reach for the ball, stretching your arm out until your fingers graze its smooth form.

You grab the ball and sit back. It's a ball, a round, normal, green plastic ball. You toss it up, catch it and turn it over in your hands. There is a name written on the surface. Black letters, obnoxiously large, a child must have wrote it.

"Bobby H."

"That doesn't belong to you."

A little girl in a green dress sits at the table. She has a book, which she guards with her arms, as if she expects it to be snatched away any moment. Your baby sits across from her.

"Hello, Hazel," she says.

You rise. "There you are."

"You sound almost happy to see me." She pulls out the chair at the foot of the table. A plate waits for you, piled high with green gems. Emeralds.

"I think I'm dying."

Your baby - you should name some time soon - gives you a slow blink. She looks over at the little girl, nose down in her book, and strokes her chin. "That might explain our visitor," she says.

You place the ball next to your plate and take your seat at the table. The girl reads, elbows on the table and her fist mashed against her cheek. She has antlers, small and covered in velvet, and round, dark brown eyes.

"Who is she?" you ask your baby.

"I think," your baby hazards, "I think she's another me. From before you conceived me."

"A you from before? You mean like a past life?"

"No, I mean another me."

Her answer disappoints more than confuses. You play with the ball, needing something to do with your hands. Rolling it on the table. Batting it. Always questions, rarely ever any good answers.

"Kid," you say.

Her hand shoots out to still yours. "Rabbit," she says, and, huffing, she closes her book. "And before you ask, that's my name. It's Rabbit, and yes, you're dying but you're going to make it."

"Hello to you, too. You always this rude or did you decide to put on your special bitchy pants just for me?"

Your baby elbows you.

"Sorry. I can't help it sometimes, I just say this shit without thinking."

Rabbit folds her hands over her book.

"What are you?"

"I'm what's for dinner," she says.

You pop your tongue. "Excuse me, what?"

"You ate me, that's why I'm here and why she's here. You ate me and another me is growing inside of you." She graces you with a hateful smile. "I hope I was delicious."

What the fuck do you say to that? You should leave, you want to leave, but you aren't sure you can wake up. You stall, hand on the ball.

Rabbit glances up to the static above, her head at an angle, her lips in a thoughtful pout. "You seem stuck," she says. "Something wrong?"

"I want to wake up!" You shoot up from your seat, knocking your chair over in the process. "I want to wake up, please. Wake me up, send me back. I--I can't--"

"Are you sure you want to wake up?" Rabbit asks.

You said what you wanted, you shouldn't have to say anything else. You want to wake up. She can't keep you trapped here - this is your dream, damn it.

Your baby tugs at your sleeve, voice tight, "Hazel, maybe you should answer her."

"It's okay."

Rabbit pushes her book across the table, knocking the ball aside. The cover text is red and black gibberish. A rabbit, a real rabbit, not a bitchy little preteen, runs under a black compass.

"I never got to finish reading this," she says. "Would you do it for me?"

This is a dream, you almost tell her. What is the point of offering you a book you can't take with you? And yet, as you stand there, fussing at your wrist, the book compels you to grab it. You pick it up and caress the spine.

"Good morning, Hazel," Rabbit says.

You salute her with the book, the gesture awkward, and turn from the table. Your baby says goodbye, and you remember something you wanted to say to her earlier. An important thing you should have said the minute you entered the dream.

"Hey, mija."

The table is gone.

You nod, "Seems about right. Well, if you can hear me, I'm sorry for hitting you."

You trip backwards and fall.

You wake up.

Food, you smell food. Ginger and garlic sizzling in hot oil, onions, peppers, and sweet carrots. And meat, you smell seared meat. It makes you want to puke.

You crack open an eye and a harsh, yellow light batters your vision. You roll onto your side and groan, bringing your knees up to your, gratefully whole, stomach. All of your aches, from the tips of yours hair to the tips of your toes.

"Morning, sunshine," comes Cody's drawl. His voice has become familiar to you,

fucking great.

"Eat a dick," you grumble.

"Hazel? Is that Hazel?" Quintana, you hear her feet pound the floor. You hear her skid to your side. She pulls you up into an embrace, crying, "You're okay!"

Your eyes adjust to the light, and you see where you are, the living room. You're laying on the sofa. You're alive.

"I'm not okay," you say, returning the hug, "but thanks, I guess. Sorry I worried you?"

Quintana starts crying, which comes as no surprise - she cries so easily. These are deserved tears, you suppose. You did almost die.

The clink of glass catches your ear, and you peer over Quintana's shoulder. The albino girl sits across from you, one leg crossed over the other. She tips a champagne flute at you.

"Hi, Hazel," she says.

You let out an scream, embarrassing in volume, and bury your face in Quintana's shoulder. She screams as well, and the albino girl, she yelps.

"Will you all calm the fuck down?" Cody shouts from the kitchen.

"She tried to kill me!"

"Yeah, I did," the albino girl confesses before taking a sip from her glass. She moves in careful actions, bending her arm just so, and lifting her chin just right. It's uncanny, and you hate it. You hate her.

Cody enters the living room, carrying four plates, one in his left hand, the others arranged in a precarious fashion in his right. He changed clothes while you were out, or lost his jacket. He wears a worn, ribbed tank top, his arms and scars bared for you to see.

"Stop being a cunt, Clover," he says.

The albino girl, Clover, narrows her pale eyes up at him. What a prissy name, Clover. "You know I hate that word."

He thrusts a plate under her nose.

"What's this?" she asks.

"Drunken noodle. Take it."

She leans away, "It has meat in it."

"It's venison." Cody prods her with the plate, the others clinking in protest. "Killed it with Blackavar a few days ago, so it's safe."

"Hey, excuse me?" you ask, and once you have their attention, you press your hands together and breathe. "What the fuck is going on? She tried to kill me!"

"Yeah," whispers Quintana. "She did."

Cody offers her Clover's plate. "Don't expect an apology from her - she's a brat."

"How can you be so casual about this?" You shake your head when he holds a dish out to you. You're hungry, starving, and your stomach growls, but you can't take it. You can't.

"It's called being fucked up," Cody says.

Clover titters, her glass against her mouth. She smiles up at him when he turns his attention to her, a smile rich with cruel promise. Speak up and I'll gut you like I did her.

"And, honestly," he says to you, "I'm used to bad shit."

He keeps the plate leveled at you. You stare down the well sauced noodles, the slivers of meat, the diagonal cut vegetables. Your empty stomach knots with hunger and disgust.

(i hope i was delicious.)

You can't eat it, but you still take it.

"Thanks." You set the plate down on your lap. "It, ah, looks like food."

"You're welcome," Cody says, putting the remaining plates down on the coffee table. He leaves the kitchen and comes back with a high back wooden chair. After getting it arranged, he sits, legs open.

"This is awkward," says Clover.

"No shit," Cody and you say in unison. He looks less pleased than you about sharing the same thought.

"Someone owes someone a coke," Clover says.

"Show her the book."

"What book?" Quintana asks.

You grip the sides of your plate, you know what they mean, even though it shouldn't be possible. Clover drains her glass and reaches under her seat, pulling out a filthy, gore caked book. She presents it by holding it out with both hands.

"While I was patching you up last night I pulled this from your guts," she says. "Along with a few cysts and your wisdom teeth."

You take the book. Between the splotches of dried viscera you catch red and black text, and a rabbit, a real rabbit, sprinting forward.

"Rabbit."

Clover draws back as you speak that name, as if the word is a spark and you the live wire. She hurries back to her chair, sits, and smooths out her skirt. "Yes, about that. Cody, do we have to--?"

"Have to what?" Quintana asks before you can open your mouth.

"A guy named Blackavar is on his way." Cody folds his hands behind his head, his gaze elsewhere, past you and Quintana and the sofa. "He was supposed to be here this morning, but traffic and shit."

Woundwort, Inlé, and now a Blackavar. You wanted to go to Maine, not deal with all these strange people and their bizarre names. You want fucking answers. You want a goddamn break.

"Spit it out," you snap.

"He's going to perform a test on you two, and you better not fail it."

Oh fuck this. Fuck this sideways. Fuck it raw. "And if we fail it?"

"You die."

END PART SIX.

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