



 **rabbit, rabbit, rabbit**  @therabbitdies

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## INTERMISSION, THE SECOND.

### Warning: Body horror, death, gore, and violence.

You watch the woman run down the street. Her kitten heels flog the concrete, each step a call, each step a crude plucking of your strings. You cock a floppy, threadbare ear to listen to her strain and whimper. Drool soaks into the mesh mouth of your mask.

She trips over her feet and takes a tumble down to the ground. She curses a wicked blue streak, and you shake your head. How unladylike! Ugly, ugly, you crack your elbow, crack your shoulder, and start to crawl.

As she gathers herself, you gather your bulk, press it down. Cat flesh, cow flesh, dog flesh, human and Rabbit, you squeeze and mold your mass into an acceptable shape. Two arms, two legs, one torso, one pelvis, and a face, a pleasant, old face.

"Hello there!" you greet, wobbling on jelly legs. Walking is easier in the Dream, you don't have to hide in the Dream. "Hello there, miss! You need assistance?"

The woman draws a hand to her chest. Wounded, you taste clean blood, you taste creamy magic. "Who the fuck are you?"

"Why, I'm ol' Robert Hedgenettle of Hedgenettle Farms!" You remove your mask, you flash her straight, white teeth. "But my friends call me Bob!"

"I, ah, okay, I don't fucking care. Do you have a car?"

"No ma'am, only got my truck."

"Does it work?" she asks.

There are scars at her ears, thin as pencil lines. You tweak your grin, widen it, and cup her jaw. You play your thumb over one of those scars. "Ayuh, that it does."

"Don't!" she recoils from you, almost falling for a second time. The muscles under her tight face spasm. "You don't need to touch me, just take me to the fucking truck! We need to get out of here!"

"Why's that? This place seems awful nice, awful quiet, too. I like it here."

"What the fuck--? People are dead!" She leans into the full force of her scream, arms pressing her small breasts flat. "The boys are eating everyone! My sons ate my

fucking husband! Some little shit almost ate me!"

"That so? Sounds like a wicked pissar, ma'am."

"A wicked what? What the fuck is wrong with you?"

Your face aches from holding your grin. This foul-mouthed old sow needs to learn to watch her tongue. You stare at the offending muscle, pink and plaque coated. Her breath stinks of dead fish.

"You're as crazy as that bitch in black--"

You pluck out her tongue mid wag.

"I knew I recognized that smell," you say.

Grasping her throat, the woman gags, she screams foaming pink spit. The remaining stump of her tongue spurts as she staggers back in retreat. You don't let her get far, one step for you is three for her.

"I knew, I knew, Christ, I knew! That dreamy, creamy sweet scent!"

You dangle her tongue over your open maw, let it hang and drip. Sweet cream, your daughter's flavor, you taste it in this woman's blood. Little Inlé, little Hrairoo, she has blessed this crusty hag with her healing touch. You swallow it whole, savoring how it wriggles down.

"It tastes as good as I remember!" you say, sucking your fingers clean. "So, she touched you? She fix you up?"

The woman turns to run and you spin her back around, and around, and around, going until she topples. You catch her, of course. Unlike her, you have manners.

You smell her, snort her scent in deep. Really take in the layers. "Did you play Operation with my little Rabbit? She kiss your boo-boos?"

Cream, musk, Rabbit, and cat--? You need to taste this woman. You need to see.

You extend your jaw. Your fragile fake skin cracks and seeps, the real you dribbling free. And, as you sink your teeth in her throat, you moan.

You eat your way into her Dream.

"I'll follow you on my bike."

You see Inlé, beautiful as ever, even when covered in blood and filth. She fills her black leather pants to bursting. The short man following her won't stop staring at her.

"A suggestion?" The man talks with his hands. Wide sweeps, short slashes, you are going to snap his big, dopey mits off at the wrist. "Perhaps it would be better to take my car?"

He presents an old Buick Electra, a 77.

Inlé lays a hand on her scarred throat. "I suppose..."

In the waking world, you bite down harder in frustration. That fancy pants bastard asking your daughter to ride with him. How dare he! You'll eat him raw. You'll swallow him whole!

The Dream ripples.

"--would be smarter than going in on a loud motorbike." The man cuts back in when the Dream settles. That was smucking fart, you let your anger get the better of you, Bobby boy. Can't let that happen again.

"That's not a bike, that's a chopper!" announces a bouncy child. You know him, Strawberry, the little kitten that wanted to run with the big bucks. You gave him your gifts and he let Inlé take them away. Ungrateful brat. He could have been a captain in your army.

Inlé blesses that waif with a smile.

"Chopper, whatever," the man says. He digs out keys and tosses them to Strawberry. "Emile, go warm up the engine, adults need to talk."

Strawberry dashes for the driver's side, climbing behind the wheel and sticking the key into the ignition. The boy glows, vibrates with excitement. His smile is the same as the one Inlé wore when you gave her her first bike.

That bike was different than the beast she strokes now. White instead of black, Italian instead of Japanese, she loved that bike. She loved you back then, too. She smiled up at you and you wanted nothing more than to stuff her into your mouth and crush her between your teeth.

"Please don't go," you whimper, aware that these are only memories filtered through the woman's Dream. "I'll eat you up - I love you so."

"Listen, Inlé, dear," the man pats her shoulder. "Sneaking you into the warren is going to be hard enough as it is. That bike is will only alert them."

She shies from him. "You're right," she says, "It would be smarter to go in your car."

Warren? Could it be the warren you're after? You grind your teeth and rewind the Dream. Play it on repeat and each time, warren. Warren. Warren.

Your sweet girl seems to have decided to meddle further. And this sleazeball, he knows the way.

You let the memory play from where you left off.

"Knew you'd see it my way," says the man.

"Get in losers!" Emile pokes his head out of the car. "We're going avenging!"

"I don't know if he's quoting movies or speaking in tongues."

A black rabbit hops up to Inlé's booted feet. With a commanding thrust of her finger, she orders it into the Buick. That rabbit, you press hard on the woman's Dream, your face going flat on an invisible pane. You know what that rabbit is, more of her magic.

Seeing it gives you an idea.

"We'll make it before He does, right?" she asks, and you seethe. She means you. She must. She dare not speak of another man with such reverence, such fear.

"Of course," the sleazeball smirks, "Cody's too wily to let that ambulatory sack of organs get the drop on him."

Cody? Cody Driscoll? Bigwig?

That ignorant little shit is still alive?!

"But not smart enough to catch you conning him?"

"Well, I don't mean to brag--"

Inlé gives the man a playful shrug. -She smiles.- "Let's go, Dick. Cody might harm the girls before we get there."

"Yes, about them, what were their names again? I didn't catch them."

"Quintana," she says, "and Hazel Rey."

You rip away from the Dream, tearing the woman's windpipe out as you emerge. You roar, spittle flying, blood sliding down your gullet. Bigwig has your Hazel-rah! He is trying to steal your ending!

Lucy, Adams, your daughter, and now Cody - Bigwig. All of them want you to suffer for all eternity. All of them want to rob you of what's yours!

"I won't let you!" you scream. "I won't, I won't! I won't let you cocksucking bastards take what's mine!"

You grab at your jaw and rip down, splitting your body from jaw to belly. You grow new teeth. You grow a new tongue. You cram the woman's body into your fresh maw. You devour her, you crunch bones, you get veins stuck between your molars.

You hork up a white rabbit, clean as your precious uniform. The woman reborn. A gift from you to her. She trembles in your presence.

"Listen, sow," you snarl down at the rabbit. "Take me to the woman who healed you! Lead me to her now!"

The rabbit dashes away and you stomp your feet. Pound the street, sending tremors through Cowslip. Scattering birds from the telephone poles. Setting off car alarms.

Your army crawls out of their hiding places. The boys you baptized in milk, they gather to you, they cheer.

"Who's hungry, boys!?" you shout.

They shriek, they bark, they yowl and yip, "We are! We are!"

"Then come!" You drop on all fours, you burst ahead, galloping on changing limbs.

"Follow good ol' Bob! Follow me, my Thousand!"

"Daddy knows the way!"

INTERMISSION END.

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