

## Rabbit Hole

By M. Robert Fisher

Was the drinking a problem or an aberration? The last thing I could remember was drinking my ninth scotch and considering making a phone call. I had no epiphany, I had no clichéd moment of clarity; the sun could have never shown or maybe the clouds never parted. I was myself in all of my own infected glory.

I awoke the next morning in an unfamiliar, pastel colored bedroom, with stuffed animals lining the floor and an unconscious black girl asleep next to me that I didn't recognize. It reeked of perfume and incense. My head wandered but didn't spin or pound or ache. I never had a typical hangover anymore, just the feeling of my body rotting from the inside out. I'd crossed a threshold that many rarely lived to describe. Or so I imagined. Such hubris.

I watched her sleep for a few moments. Staring at the back of her head, with her messy long black hair, and bare shoulder blades, I wondered what kind of woman she could be that she let me share a bed with her. It was then I realized that we were both nude. My instinct was to run but when I sat up the pastel colors began circling around overhead and fell back into the coddled comfort of her sweet smelling, almost therapeutic, sheets and comforters.

"Ray," she whispered shaking me.

I grunted and rolled to my side and instantly knew something felt amiss.

"Ray, wake up," she said, "I think you had an accident."

My eyes shot open with the kind of vigor as if waking from a bad dream. I could feel the moist, urine stained blankets and sheets around me. I could smell my squalor polluting her sanctity.

"What happened?" I asked for a lack of better things to say.

"You tell me," she said as she hopped out of bed and began putting on some clothes.

She was beautiful, which made the circumstances all the more daunting. She didn't go to bed with me, I thought, but a version of myself that I literally had no access to.

I sat up in her bed.

"I'm sorry," I started, "I don't know what to say. This should be embarrassing."

"It isn't?" She asked with a surprisingly amused smirk.

I don't know," I started, "Is it?"

She laughed. Not the kind of laugh you get when you say something intentionally funny, either.

"What happened last night?" She asked.

"What do you mean?"

"We can't tell Tiff," she said.

Tiffany was a girl I'd dated casually but she was always jumping in and out of relationships. She lived under the delusion that we could remain friends and I lived under the delusion that I could be happy being the person she fell on when she was unhappy. I was like her own personal drug problem, personified. The sad part was that I found comfort in it.

"Why would we?" I asked in a way to suggest that the thought would have never entered my mind. Because truth be told, if I left right that instant, I would have never known they were friends or that was how we'd met. I could have lived my life and she could have lived hers. Tiffany would have never entered anything remotely close to our brief stratosphere had she not said her name. I thought about this and realized that I didn't remember anything and yet I didn't care and had no concern of what might have happened. That concerned me.

"I don't know," she laughed unemphatically. Nervously, even. "I just know your history."

"Well, I'm not sure what she told you, but I'd hardly call getting drunk and fucking while she ignores phone calls from her boyfriend a strong basis for a relationship."

"Is that really all you do?"

"We talk a little."

She laughed.

"I'm only saying you have nothing to feel guilty about."

"But I do," she started, "Because she has been telling me that she's been planning on leaving him for you."

"She likes to talk," I said.

"What do you mean?"

"I just mean she hasn't and saying the words doesn't make them fact," I started, "It bothered me at first but I can honestly say that I don't care what she does, anymore. I have nothing to feel guilty about and neither do you."

She rolled her eyes and started gathering my clothes together for me as if some gesture to illustrate just how annoyed she was with my lack of empathy or guilt or whatever. Another woman expecting me to be something I can never live up to or even lie because I am never told what it is.

"I can't help feeling the way that I feel," she said sternly as she handed me my clothes. "You should get dressed so I can drive you back to your car."

Guilt is a funny thing. I had recently read a short story about a man in his fifties meeting all of these children he'd fathered over three decades for the first time. And most of them were angry and resentful of him never being around, despite them turning out to be fairly well adjusted adults but still had to blame something on him like their inability to get the job they want or keep a man. They weren't drug addicts or whores. They were just miserable like most Americans. And he just sat and nodded letting the guilt sink in and swim and as he went on not defending himself, his daughters grew more and more inimical and gaudy. Like his guilt was a drug and the more he hated himself the better they felt but it was never enough. They just wanted that feeling to last forever. I just wanted him to say "You're the result of a fucking orgasm. Let it go." But he just sat there and nodded. I guess I am just built differently. I guess I don't feel guilty when I am supposed to.

On the drive to my car she hardly spoke to me at all. She'd occasionally mention something about an audition or a photo-shoot or an open mic she performed at. She was kind of the scourge of this city, in that she simply wanted to be famous. She likely had no desire to be good at whatever it was she did.

"I met Jude Law there and his agent there," she said driving by some bar on Hollywood Blvd.

"Is this all supposed to impress me? Does it impress most people?"

"I don't know what else to talk about," she said annoyed.

"Most people that talk about art in some capacity talk about it passionately."

"I'm very passionate. I was once on CSI."

"I'm not sure I am following your logic."

"It's seen by millions of people. It was a speaking role, too."

I just laughed and closed my eyes. She eventually pulled up beside my car.

"Hey, can I ask you something?" I started before I got out. "Why'd you take me home with you last night?"

"Well, you were nicer than you are now, funnier, too. But you looked so sad after Tiff disappeared."

"So, you felt sorry for me?"

"Pretty much at the time but less so now."

I smiled. It was a very clever insult and I appreciated the unexpected layered context. Or maybe I just gave her too much credit and created subtext where there was none to be intended. I liked my version better.

I got out and never saw her again. At least not yet.