

URBAN RABBIT CHRONICLES

A new play
by
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Character Breakdown

Ted: black, 30-40 with glasses, a pharmacist.

Karen: black 30s, Ted's wife, a retired editor and aspiring novelist.

Rev. Brock Mackenzie: white, any age, a Catholic priest

Rose: 20s, Dominican, Ted's assistant at the pharmacy.

Rabbit/Silas: A man with an insidious smile, any age, or race. Seductive and wily.

Place: Manhattan

Time: Now

ONE

Darkness. Drumming. Lights flash wildly on and off, spotlights up and down on Ted (black, 30-40 with glasses), Karen (black 30s), Brock (white, a priest), Rose (20s, Dominican) and RABBIT (a man with an insidious smile, perhaps dressed in one color head to toe. Any age, or race, but definitely seductive and wily.) Drums crescendo and lights come up full, then go out. A spotlight on Ted.

TED

I was taught to pray for what I wanted. That's what they told us in Catholic school. That God was listening. (beat) And so I prayed for everything - a new bike. A better calculator. To get into a good college. (beat) I didn't think God cared about relationship stuff, so I never prayed for a girl. (beat) But God somehow knew what I wanted.

Lights up on Karen. Ted smiles at us.

TED (CONT'D)

And I got it. (beat) But that's a different story. That's not the story I'm here to tell.

Ted saddens at this. Lights up on the full cast.

KAREN

In the Kingdom of Manhattan -

TED

In the kingdom?

KAREN

In the kingdom -

Beat. Ted accepts this.

TED

There was a man.

KAREN

A woman.

TED

They were happy.

KAREN

Yes they were.

Beat. Lights change. Karen and Ted are in bed.

That was -

TED

Yes.

KAREN

Amazing -

TED

Yes.

KAREN

I haven't - ever -

TED

Me neither.

KAREN

Until -

TED

Today.

KAREN

Yes, now.

TED

Yes.

KAREN

They laugh. Karen seems distracted by something. Ted looks to us.

I'll never forget how happy we were.

TED

Beat. Lights shift.

In the kingdom -

KAREN

There was a priest.

BROCK

Brock crosses himself.

A colleague.

ROSE

And a rabbit.

ALL

And there TED

Were BROCK

Many KAREN

Multiple TED

Mysteries. RABBIT

Music. Rose and Rabbit leave. An office, perhaps, rolls on - or the hint of one. Ted and Karen sit. There's a table/desk. Brock leans against it, stares at them. Lights. A major mood shift.

So what are the problems? BROCK

He's just needy. KAREN

I'm needy? You're saying you're perfect? TED

No one's perfect. KAREN

Thank you. TED

But the *problems* - his word - don't - KAREN

She works too much. TED

I'm blocked! KAREN

She's trying to work - TED

At what? BROCK

I'm a writer. Fiction. KAREN

TED

It's a problem. Not the fiction part - the work part.

BROCK

You make money - ?

KAREN

I - might. I have. Some stories. A collection.

BROCK

Congratulations.

KAREN

Thank you.

TED

I work. Long hours. During which I leave her alone. (beat)
She works - she tries to work - at home - but I - the money
that comes in - is mine.

KAREN

So. It's not like I never brought in money. Just not now.
(beat) The apartment's mine.

TED

Yes, fine. It is. She bought the apartment before she knew
me. (beat) It's not a competition. And I didn't mean - I work
like she doesn't.

KAREN

That's what you said. That's *exactly* -

TED

You said you're blocked. So you don't work.

KAREN

I'm beginning to. I do stuff.

TED

You stare -

KAREN

I write sometimes. And I read. You're just not in the room.

TED

What I meant - I work *outside* the home.

BROCK

Doing?

TED

I'm a pharmacist. (beat) The problem is - She works - she
tries to - all the time. There are limits. There should be.
She - stares -

Stares?
BROCK

Yes. Like -
TED

He stares into space for a moment.

At my computer.
KAREN

Ah.
BROCK

I'm trying to get at something - you know? Something - beyond myself. So I - it takes time.
KAREN

She has time - it's all she has - it doesn't mean she's *productive*.
TED

I was laid off, remember? I was let go. I used to edit for a publishing house. We agreed to this - we put money away -
KAREN

There's not much left.
TED

It's only been a few -
KAREN

A year.
TED

It *has not* been a year.
KAREN

She has no memory. *That's* our problem. Hers. One of hers. She doesn't remember how long it's been. She doesn't remember to cook - not that she can cook -
TED

No you didn't -
KAREN

Do you? Do you cook? It's been so long. I cook. Or order out. Or she orders out - *that* she remembers how to do. I do dishes. I clean up. I work 12 hour days. Mostly she stares at her computer screen.
TED

KAREN

Or I read. I read sometimes. (beat) You'd rather have a housewife? You going to trade me in?

TED

Then she'll bait me like this -

KAREN

We agreed that this is my time to -

TED

She doesn't remember to come to bed. Who knows if she remembers sex? She doesn't remember me. Her ambition gets in the way.

KAREN

I am not ambitious -

TED

Driven.

KAREN

I want things. That's all. There's nothing wrong with wanting things.

Ted and Karen stare at each other a moment.

KAREN

And I remember you. That's not fair to say - I remember.

Beat.

BROCK

You were saying - your work -

Beat.

KAREN

Yes. My work. Something - I'm trying to locate.

BROCK

And are you? How's it going?

KAREN

That's - thank you. It's - yeah, it's going - well. I'm - really it's hard to say, I was blocked - but - it's going. Now. (beat) He should be - happy for me.

TED

I've read your stuff.

KAREN

You have not. Have you? What do you mean?

TED

Whenever you show me your stuff -

KAREN

I almost never -

TED

But when you do - it's - not uplifting. Whatever you're getting to - It's never - happy.

KAREN

That's not true.

TED

She used to be happy - we used to spend time together. We don't now.

KAREN

I read. I read to you.

TED

Reviews, Karen - you read me reviews of other people's work.

KAREN

Friends of mine.

TED

People you despise. Contemporaries. People you used to edit.

KAREN

Despise. That's sounds *so* - Dickens. Despise.

TED

She reads these things, they torture her.

KAREN

No. No. I have to know what people think. About what people write. That's not wrong - right? Father? Don't you read the paper? Father?

BROCK

Yes, I - yes.

KAREN

Well, then.

TED

Well, then, what? He reads the paper. But probably not just reviews - right?

Brock thinks.

BROCK

I like reviews.

TED

But you read books, right? Or magazines too. Don't you?

Beat.

BROCK

Who's idea was this? Coming here?

TED

Mine.

BROCK

Ah. Do you - go to our church?

TED

I've been.

BROCK

How many times?

TED

A bunch. You give good homilies -

BROCK

Thank you.

TED

And you seem - kind.

BROCK

Do I?

KAREN

Yes, actually.

BROCK

Good! What's your favorite - of my homilies?

TED

Oh, well. (beat) There was the one about sacrifice. Abraham and Isaac, Jesus. How one had to go through with it and one didn't. The willingness was all - in the old testament, but you had to follow through in the New.

BROCK

Yes. (beat) I liked that one myself.

TED

So, I thought - we'd come talk. (beat) She won't do therapy.

KAREN

My brother's a therapist. Thinks he knows everything. He doesn't. And therapists have that - you know, they stare at you - like they *know*. And they nod.

With all that authoritative condescension. I don't need that. I've always liked priests. I wasn't raised Catholic, wasn't raised anything. But I believe in - something - I'm spiritual - (Ted grunts.) I think - or I would be. But - usually when I meet a priest I trust him. Of course - I'm aware of the scandals and all that - which is - which are - horrible. But I also appreciate the - ambivalence - the duality maybe. You're a man, but you're celibate. There's all this pedophilia going on and you stick it out. You could run, hide, close up shop. Do you? No. Why? Something larger. Right?

BROCK

Yes. I - yes.

KAREN

I respect that. The duality. The commitment. For any non-pedophile priest to stick it out -

TED

Karen.

KAREN

I respect that.

BROCK

Thank you.

KAREN

You're welcome. You have some - vision - that keeps you - that *keeps* you.

BROCK

And God. And Jesus.

KAREN

Sure. Right. Them. (beat) You get up early probably?

BROCK

Yes.

KAREN

You pray.

BROCK

Yes.

KAREN

And you - serve.

BROCK

We do.

KAREN

I relate to that. It's - I'm - in my own way, I'm - with the writing -

TED

But nothing else.

KAREN

Do I need something else?

TED

Father, I don't begrudge her the chance to - explore - it's just that - I don't know that she's being productive.

KAREN

You don't have the right to judge my productivity.

TED

If I'm paying for it I do. I want my wife back. I miss - what we used to do - before.

BROCK

Like - for example?

TED

(to us)

We used to read to each other. Watch Frontline, Nova, the News Hour.

KAREN

All he watches is PBS.

TED

You used to watch. And we'd read books. Take a walk in the park. Go to a flea market on Saturdays. Take in a museum. (beat) I just want some time. To start.

KAREN

And then?

TED

It's like I scare her or something. Like she's afraid of intimacy.

KAREN

Please. Maybe I'm afraid of boredom.

TED

I'm boring?

Beat.

BROCK

You hear what he's saying?

KAREN

Yes - I hear it - I hear the words.

BROCK

Is there anything in that list of things he mentioned? The park. Flea market. Museum. Is there anything in that - that you want - that you could maybe - plan to do together?

KAREN

I have so much to do -

Ted looks pained.

BROCK

I understand. But even the most *productive* people. They don't work all the time - do they? (beat) Maybe you could *try* it. One of those things.

KAREN

Can I take a pad with me?

TED

No, it's not about you *doing* more. *Proving* something - Spending time with me is enough - should be enough. (beat) Am I that hard to be with?

KAREN

He thinks everything I do is about him.

TED

Nothing is about me, Karen.

KAREN

Please!

TED

You don't want to spend time with me, you'd rather take a pad.

KAREN

I don't want to miss a good idea.

TED

Is it like they never come back? Is it like the ideas just go and never return?

KAREN

Yes. It is. Sometimes.

TED

Give me a break Karen, they're not like -

KAREN

Don't -

Beat.

BROCK

What?

KAREN

He was going to say children.

TED

How do you know what I was going to say?

KAREN

I know. That's how boring you are. (beat) Why would you say that? - This isn't - this isn't about that. That's - it isn't.

BROCK

It's OK if it is. About - whatever that is.

KAREN

It's not.

Beat.

BROCK

That's OK too. (beat) Karen. Would you be willing to go to - say - a flea market for - say two hours this weekend?

KAREN

With my pad?

TED

No.

BROCK

Without.

Karen thinks. She closes her eyes.

KAREN

I -

Karen opens her eyes. Ted shakes his head, looking at Brock.

KAREN (CONT'D)

One hour.

BROCK

Ted?

TED

I'll - take an hour.

BROCK

Good. Good. So - a flea market. Is there one?

TED

Yeah. There's - we'll find one. There's always one.

BROCK

Let me know how it goes.

Karen and Ted nod. Both look nervous.
Lights. Drums.

TWO

Lights up. A flea market. Ted and Karen
dressed in overcoats. Street sounds,
maybe some music from a CD seller.

TED

There's a record guy.

KAREN

You want to buy records? We don't have a record player.

TED

I was just saying there's a guy.

KAREN

Yeah. There's a guy. Clearly.

TED

What do you want to do?

KAREN

Be home writing.

TED

Staring -

KAREN

Writing.

TED

Karen! What do you want to do *here*?

KAREN

Is there food?

TED

Doesn't look like it. Besides the food at these things is so
unhealthy.

Beat. Karen looks at her watch.

Honey? TED

What? KAREN

Beat. Silas, a funky vendor (played by the actor playing Rabbit) struts over. Slightly stoned looking, tie-dye, sunglasses. Caribbean accent.

Welcome. To my market. Silas. That's my name. SILAS

Hello. KAREN

Hi. TED

Beat. Silas stands there nodding at them, smiling. Beat.

You got good weather. TED

They're looking out for Silas, them upstairs, downstairs. SILAS
People don't believe - but I got connections. (beat) Also got some solid merchandise around here today. There's the jeans booth, the knickknacks, the housewares, clothing, sweaters, furniture in the back. Magazines and reading materials over there on the far left. And we got the picture frame lady. She's all about picture frames. Marguerite.

He waves to her. Blows her a kiss.

And I got statues. On my own table. Over there. SILAS

Statues? KAREN

Like what? TED

All kinds. Totems. Carved wood. Small metal sculptures. SILAS
Glass. Created with love and imagination - imported. Come take a look.

They walk over to Silas' table. It's covered with small statues.

SILAS

It's the most unique collection of statues in the Kingdom of Manhattan.

TED

The kingdom - ?

They look over. Silas' table seems to glow. The glow gets brighter and brighter as Ted and Karen stare at it - more and more intrigued. Lights shift. Brock appears.

BROCK

How was it?

KAREN

It was, fine. Nice.

TED

She kept looking at her watch at first.

BROCK

Only at first?

KAREN

Yes.

TED

We bought something.

BROCK

Great. What?

KAREN & TED

A rabbit.

TED

Wooden. A small statue.

KAREN

We both - fell in love with it.

SILAS

I see you made a connection.

KAREN

I guess I did. It's beautiful. Where's it from?

SILAS

I don't know. Far away. The other side.

TED

Of - ?

SILAS

The flip side, man!

KAREN

Look at the detail on it.

TED

It's amazing. (beat) How much?

SILAS

Thirty two.

TED

Really? For such a small -

SILAS

One of a kind.

KAREN

We'll take it.

TED

We took it. (to us)

BROCK

Good.

TED

That night instead of staring at her computer, she stared at the rabbit. Actually we both did. Stared at it together.

Lights shift. They're at home now, and yet still with Brock. Karen and Ted comment on the rabbit, which is small and wooden and appears downstage in a light. (Perhaps there's a projection of it upstage.)

KAREN

I wouldn't say "stared". That makes it sounds so - obsessive. Meditated on it, I'd say. We both meditated on it.

BROCK

How did that feel?

KAREN

You sound like a therapist.

BROCK

I don't mean to. I'm just curious.

TED

Good, felt good to do something together. Right?