

"THE GATES"

by

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Time: Winter 2005

Place: Central Park, NYC. Christo and Jeanne Claude's "Gates" installation dominates the park. LEIGH stands near a park bench taking photographs. BUNNY approaches the bench.

BUNNY

Anyone sitting here?

Leigh, engaged in her work, does not respond.

BUNNY

(under her breath)

"Everything is possible for him who believes..."

Bunny begins to sit. Leigh quickly begins to move her belongings.

BUNNY

You don't have to move your things.

LEIGH

It's not a problem.

BUNNY

I'm not going to steal anything from you if that's what you're thinking.

LEIGH

I wasn't thinking that...

BUNNY

I'm not like these other fools out here you know. I've got morals. Morals *and* a conscience.

LEIGH

I'm sure you do.

BUNNY

Then what? You just wanted to make sure that I had enough room to sit?

LEIGH

Well, yes.

BUNNY

I see. So you must think that my ass is just too fat to share this bench with you?

LEIGH

No, I didn't mean that either...

Bunny lets out a huge laugh.

BUNNY

(laughing)

You're so easy! I'm just messin' with you baby.
Relax. You should have seen the look on your face!
Priceless. Just priceless. Wanna drink?

She reveals a small bottle of brandy.

LEIGH

No thank you.

BUNNY

I'm Bunny.

LEIGH

Nice to meet you.

Leigh changes a lens on her camera.

BUNNY

(muttering to herself)

So I guess you aint got a name? Shit, everyone's
got a name. Even *dogs* got names. Guess you think
you're just too good to give out your name to just
anybody. "The name of the LORD is a strong tower;
the righteous run to it and are safe."

LEIGH

(reluctantly)

It's Leigh. My name is Leigh, and I'm sorry,
but I'm trying to work here.

BUNNY

So who's stopping you? Work.

Leigh returns to taking photos. Bunny watches. Suddenly Bunny
begins to sing to herself.

BUNNY

So what's the deal with all of this?

LEIGH

All of what?

BUNNY

All of this.

(she indicates to The Gates)

LEIGH

It's art.

BUNNY
It is?

LEIGH
Yes.

BUNNY
Oh. Looks more like a clothes line to me.

LEIGH
Well, everyone's entitled to their own opinion.

Silence. Then finally

BUNNY
..like big, orange, bed sheets flappin' in the wind. Flappin', flappin', flappin'... You're a photographer?

LEIGH
That's right.

BUNNY
I guess you think that was a stupid question. I mean you are out here taking pictures.

LEIGH
Uh huh.

BUNNY
I mean what else would you be besides a photographer?

Bunny continues to watch Leigh work.

BUNNY
I guess you could just be just a housewife.

LEIGH
I suppose.

BUNNY
A housewife who's boredom has finally driven her over the edge so all that she has left are meaningless hobbies to keep her mind off of her crumbling marriage and self despair.

Leigh shoots Bunny a look of disdain.

BUNNY

(laughing)

Ha! Got you again! You're way too easy! Why so sensitive baby? What's the matter? Did I strike a nerve?

LEIGH

(furious)

No you did not strike a nerve. You have no idea what...

Suddenly, Leigh catches herself and releases her frustration with laughter. Bunny joins her.

BUNNY

Come on, just one. I won't tell if you won't.

Bunny looks over her shoulder and shakes her bottle.

LEIGH

Ok. Just one.

BUNNY

Now you're talking.

Bunny takes out a paper cup from her bag and pours Leigh a drink.

BUNNY

Sorry baby, I got to be careful. I can't afford to catch any nasty germs. No offense.

LEIGH

None taken.

LEIGH

Thank you.

BUNNY

No problem. I'll do it, but given a choice, I'd rather not drink alone.

LEIGH

I hear ya.

BUNNY

Cheers.

LEIGH

Cheers.

They look out onto the gates.

LEIGH

Now that you've mentioned it, it does kind of remind me of a clothes line.

BUNNY

And is that such a bad thing?

LEIGH

Well, I can think of at least two Parisian artists that would not care for that analogy.

BUNNY

And why not?

LEIGH

Because it diminishes the work.

BUNNY

I was just being honest.

LEIGH

Well sometimes honesty is not always the best policy.

BUNNY

Oh, I disagree.

LEIGH

It's a free country.

BUNNY

Don't you want the pictures that you're taking to be honest?

Bunny takes a swig from her flask.

BUNNY

Clothes lines are honest... probably the most genuine things you'll ever see. And they're also revealing.

LEIGH

What do you mean, revealing?

BUNNY

Baby, I can look at any clothes line outside any home in America and tell you *everything* about the people who live there.

LEIGH

Oh?

BUNNY

Hmm hmm. Like for example, in Virginia where I grew up our neighbor, *Mrs. Jenkins*, would hang clothes every Saturday morning and every Saturday morning *Mr. Jenkin's* work clothes would be drying in the wind. Big, old, dungaree overalls covered in grease and oil from the garage from where he worked until he was sixty. She'd also hang her little girl's dresses up on the line. Not their play clothes but the nice ones that they wore on Sunday. She had two girls and each dress had their initials on them. "V" for Violet's dress and "J" for Jamie's. You could also tell by the embroidery on those little dresses that Mrs. Jenkin's was mighty good with a needle and thread. Before the dresses they're were diapers hanging, see what I'm talking about?

LEIGH

I do. The laundry told a story.

BUNNY

Exactly. Now you're thinking girl. Your turn. What stories did your clothes line tell growing up?

LEIGH

I was raised here in the city. We didn't have one.

BUNNY

Now that is a real shame. There's nothing like the smell and feel of clothes. Fresh off the line.

LEIGH

I think my grandmother had one out in Long Island. It was one of those that looked like a TV antennae and it spun around. She'd always had her stockings and underwear hanging up to dry.

(laughing)

Thank goodness it was all hidden in the back yard.

BUNNY

I remember one time Mrs. Jenkins had her apron hanging one day and it was stained with blood.

LEIGH

Blood?

BUNNY

Momma said it wasn't blood but really jelly from her makin' preserves. But I knew what jelly stains looked like and that was no jelly stain. It took weeks of washin' before that stain finally faded from deep red to a washed out, shade of rust. We always suspected that Mr. Jenkins was rough on her but not that rough. Now if all that aint revealing and honest I don't know what is.

Suddenly Bunny stands up and begins to scream across the park.

BUNNY

HEY YOU FOOL! Get the FUCK away from my shopping cart! Yeah, I'm talking to you! Don't fuck with my shit or I'll come over there and bust your face right into the sidewalk! Did you see that Motherfucker? Trying to steal my shit right in front of own eyes. Son of a bitch.

(to Leigh)

Just because we live on the streets doesn't mean there isn't a code by which we conduct ourselves. If we didn't, it'd be complete chaos all the time. You hear that Motherfucker? Respect yourself fool! Damn!

Bunny sits and adjusts her legs. She appears to be in pain.

LEIGH

Are you ok?

BUNNY

It's my leg. Bad circulation. Worse now that I'm getting older. The cold doesn't help much either.

LEIGH

That looks pretty bad. Have you seen a doctor?

BUNNY

Now do I look like I can afford a doctor to you?

LEIGH

I mean, there must be a clinic or someplace you can go to get assistance.

BUNNY

I've been and trust me, they aren't much help. They just make you wait a long time, give you some bullshit pills and then just send you on your way. It'll be fine. I just need another drink and I'll be right as rain. Want another?

LEIGH

No thank you.

Leigh begins to pack her things.

BUNNY

Are you going?

LEIGH

Yeah, I better. I have a lot more ground to cover today.

BUNNY

Why don't you stay? We were just starting to have nice conversation. You'll get your things done. Why don't you stay with me for a bit longer? Please?

LEIGH

Well...

BUNNY

Think of it as your good deed for the day.

LEIGH

Ok. But not too much longer. I have a deadline. I need these photographs ready before Thursday.

BUNNY

What's Thursday?

Bunny takes out a sandwich and starts eating.

LEIGH

I'm leaving town. I have another assignment. It's a book cover.

BUNNY

That sounds good.

LEIGH

Not really. It's a portrait cover and I hate doing portraits.

BUNNY

Oh?

LEIGH

They never come out the way I want them to. It's just the nature of them. They always come out too contrived. Cold. Not very interesting. This particular project is going to be even more of a struggle.

BUNNY

Why?

LEIGH

The author terrifies me.

BUNNY

How come?

LEIGH

He makes me nervous. He's arrogant and quite intimidating to be around. I don't even like his book.

BUNNY

What's it about?

LEIGH

Some crap about how men are losing their power and identity to women in modern society.

BUNNY

You're right. That is a bunch of crap.

LEIGH

I tried to get out of it but no one else is available. Or so they say.

BUNNY

Well, you got a job and you're working. You really shouldn't complain.

LEIGH

You're right. That was thoughtless of me. I apologize.

BUNNY

For what?

LEIGH

Nothing. I was just insensitive.

Defensive, Bunny sits up a little.

BUNNY

You know I don't need you to feel sorry for me.
I'm not someone who needs pity.

LEIGH

I wasn't pitying you...

BUNNY

(aggressive)

Just because I'm a lonely woman doesn't mean that
I'm some Goddamn poster child for the homeless!
I just wanted some nice, light, conversation.
That's all.

LEIGH

And that's what I...

BUNNY

You can take your white, liberal, guilt and bring
it to another bench because I'm not playin' that
here! Not today, Not any day!

LEIGH

Ok Bunny, I think we're about done. I need to get
back to work. Thanks for the drink and you should
really get your leg checked out before it gets
worse.

Leigh gets up and begins to gather her up her things.

BUNNY

"Perturbation derives from unwise opinions and
judgments."

LEIGH

Would you *please* stop spouting off Bible
references to me!

BUNNY

That wasn't the Bible that time. It was Cicero.

LEIGH

I don't care if it's Dr. Seuss. It's annoying!

BUNNY

Well excuse me for trying to keep myself educated.

LEIGH

Goodbye Bunny.

Leigh begins to walk away.

BUNNY
Goodbye... *Heather*.

Stunned, Leigh stands dead in her tracks.

LEIGH
What did you just call me?

BUNNY
You heard me.

Leigh takes a step back.

BUNNY
It is your *real* name isn't it?

LEIGH
I haven't gone by Heather for years. How did you know that? Who the hell are you? Are you some kind of lunatic or something?
(horrified)
Are you stalking me?

BUNNY
Now baby...

LEIGH
Don't "now baby" me! You tell me who the fuck you are right now, or I'm calling the police!

BUNNY
Heather...

LEIGH
I mean it!

She takes out her cell phone. Silence. Finally.

BUNNY
I used to work for your family. Years ago. You called me Beverly back then. "Ms. B" for short?

LEIGH
(dumbfounded)
Beverly? Is it really you?

BUNNY
Seems you're not the only one who's changed names. You can put your phone away.

Leigh sits back down. Silence