

MOONFLOWER

Written by

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Based on the novel "White Tears" by Hari Kunzuru

INT. METRO - YEAR 2099

ROSS, mid-20s, dressed cozily for a day of travel, boards train, sits by window. Presses play on watch, folds hands over stomach. We hear AUDIOBOOK begin playing directly into her head.

EXT. METRO

AUDIOBOOK continues. ROSS cuts through pedestrian sea, head up. Observing the sleekness of gentrified architecture. Someone jostles her roughly, she scowls back. Continues walking with her head down.

EXT. BUS STOP

As ROSS approaches, watch battery dies. She sits at the stop, bored. Pacing, eyes wandering. Across the street, ROSS notices a WHITE FLOWER, striking in front of a red brick building. Contemplates it briefly, then scurries across street to pick it. Bus pulls up right as she returns to the stop.

CUT TO:

ROSS IN BUS WINDOW REFLECTION, FLOWER tucked behind ear.

ROSS GETS OFF in wooded part of the city. Continues walking.

ESTABLISHING SHOT - CABIN - SUNSET.

ROSS walks up to the dingy house. Her home now. DEEP SIGH.

INT. CABIN - KITCHEN

ROSS cooks sloppily. ANGLE ON FLOWER, SITTING IN WATER ON TABLE. PHONE BUZZES. CALL FROM SISTER. ROSS picks up.

ROSS

Girl hey. Sorry I forgot to text  
you when I got in, I was so hungry  
I went straight to the store --

ALOE

No, it's fine I get it. It's just  
mom texted me all worried and said  
I should check in on you.

ROSS

Oh.

ALOE

And she wants you to know she's proud of you! We're both so proud you're home running the family business and--

ROSS

Proud? She never talked to me about no proud.

ALOE

She's trying.

ROSS

(licking fingers)

Yeah whatever. So am I. I'm here right? And where is she?

ALOE

Ross...just focus on what you can control. Focus on you.

ROSS

Right. Yeah. Love you too. Bye.  
(hangs up)

ROSS sits across from the FLOWER. Clinks her water to the FLOWERS' like an old friend.

PAN DOWN, THROUGH FLOOR.

INT. CABIN - BASEMENT

INTERCUT WITH SCENES FROM ROSS' INTERIOR, NOTED IN ALL CAPS.

Candle light gives the unfinished basement a sense of warmth. Incense burning. Barefoot, ROSS adds the finishing touches to a bookcase holding photos of ALOE, their parents. Potted plants. A knife. Crystals. A bundle of sage, a joint, a notebook. Stack of books. ROSS lights joint. Lights sage. Paces the room, paying particular attention to doorways.

ROSS SITS AT CENTERSTAGE. CALM. BATHED IN BLUE.

Returning to the altar, ROSS takes out a notebook, begins writing her intentions.

A SHADOW CIRCLES ROSS. GETTING CLOSER. A SOFT HUMMING CAN BE HEARD.

ROSS eyes drift shut. Her hands scribble furiously.

THE FIGURE GRABS ROSS' SHOULDERS. SHE JOLTS FORWARD, EYES WIDE OPEN.

ROSS eyes fling open, she breathes heavily. Notices an untitled SONG written in her notebook. Not in her handwriting. She contemplates it.

ROSS gags. Then throws up.

INT. ARAMINTA'S BOOKSTORE - AN HOUR BEFORE OPENING

ROSS sings the SONG under her breath as she puts books back on the shelf. A CUSTOMER enters unnoticed behind her.

CUSTOMER creeps up, pretending to look at books. Trying to get ROSS to notice her. Oblivious, ROSS serenades a copy of "Sister Outsider" by Audre Lorde. CUSTOMER clears her throat. ROSS jumps. Gives the CUSTOMER a forced smile.

CUSTOMER

I'm so sorry, I just -- I've been waiting for this store to re-open all week, and I was really excited--

ROSS

No, no you're good. Just scared me. We're happy to be back.

A flirty pause. CUSTOMER steps a little closer.

CUSTOMER

So you sing?

ROSS

Uh, I was in a band once but I mostly did guitar.

CUSTOMER

(a beat)

You should come to this open mic tomorrow night. At Club House. Free for girls and gays.

ROSS laughs, seems interested.

CUSTOMER (CONT'D)

I'd love to hear that song again.

ROSS

What'd you say your name was?

LENNIE

I didn't. It's Lennie.

ROSS  
Nice to meet you. I'm Ross.

LENNIE  
(walking towards door)  
Ross. I'll see you tomorrow?

ROSS  
Yeah. Tomorrow.

LENNIE smiles, exits. ROSS returns to her imaginary audience, graciously accepting their praise. She bows.

INT. ROSS HOUSE - BASEMENT

ROSS bends down to pick up guitar. MUSIC blasting from record player behind her. She checks herself out in a propped up mirror. She's feeling herself.

SUDDENLY, A MEMORY: PAN ACROSS AN OBITUARY PAGE. CUT TO A PERSONS SHADOW ON BRICK. SHADOW WALKS OFF SCREEN.

ROSS gags. Almost throws up, but holds it in. PAN UP THROUGH FLOOR. CAMERA ON FLOWER.

FADE TO:

EXT. CLUB HOUSE - NIGHT

MUFFLED PERFORMANCE can be heard outside. ROSS KNOCKS. SHUFFLING from behind door. It opens, ROSS walks in. CAMERA ON FLOWERBED.

CUT TO:

A SHADOW RUNS ACROSS THE EXTERIOR OF CLUB HOUSE. AGAIN, A MEMORY: AN OBITUARY FOR IVY PORTER, OR AS HER FRIENDS AND FAMILY ALSO KNEW HER, MOONFLOWER BOTANNICA.

CUT BACK TO:

ROSS, disoriented. She sees a familiar face near the stage. It's LENNIE, drunk and happy to see ROSS.

LENNIE  
You're right on time! I think  
you're up next.

ROSS  
Cool, you have water? I feel kind  
of--

LENNIE shoves a water bottle at ROSS. Gets a cue from onstage.

LENNIE  
Oh, now actually. Go!

ROSS chugs the water, walks to the mic. It SQUEAKS.

ROSS  
(awkwardly)  
How's everyone tonight?

SHOTS OF A MEMORY, CLEAR. OBITUARY READS "IVY 'MOONFLOWER' PORTER, POPULAR DRAG KING AND COMMUNITY LEADER, SHOT BY UNKNOWN ASSAILANT."

CROWD CHATS amongst themselves. ROSS begins singing the SONG.

EXT. CLUB HOUSE - YEAR 2019 - DAY TO NIGHT

SONG continues as Ivy "MOONFLOWER" Porter waters the FLOWERS to the left of the doorway. As sun sets, MOONFLOWER BOTANNICA, Ivy's drag king persona, appears to the right of the doorway. Warmly welcoming people inside.

INT. CLUB HOUSE - CHILDREN'S HOUR

DART FLIES INTO DARTBOARD. Beside it, flyer welcomes us to a ball celebrating queer lives lost to state violence. Mothers and queens share food, stories, and laughter. MOONFLOWER floats through the small crowd, to a bench adorned with pictures of lost children amongst flowers and candles. MOONFLOWER adds an ULTRASOUND, decorated with a crescent moon and a stanza of SONG. MOONFLOWER bows his head. The party gathers around him.

A LAYING ON OF HANDS.

BANG as door flies open. SONG STOPS. Landlord, DOUG, 53, unkempt, enters. The room is silent, seething at the interruption. MOONFLOWER steps forward, darts gripped and ready in his hand.

MOONFLOWER  
I paid my rent Douglass.

DOUG laughs heartily.

DOUG  
Well you must not have read my email.

MOONFLOWER  
I didn't get an email.

DOUG thinks. Pulls out his phone.

DOUG  
(typing)  
Ms. Porter. I sold this building.  
You and your...  
(snidely)  
co-workers will have to find  
another place of residence. By the  
12th. Aaand send.  
(pockets phone)  
Check again.

MOONFLOWER  
That's Mother's Day. You can't--

DOUG  
Already did. Sue me if you have a  
couple thousand on hand.  
(noticing the memorial)  
Also, no candles allowed in the  
building. Fire hazard.

DOUG walks up to the candles, blowing them out. MOONFLOWER'S  
ULTRASOUND falls to the ground.

DOUG (CONT'D)  
(insincere)  
Oops.

DOUG picks it up. MOONFLOWER adjusts grip on the darts,  
threatening release. DOUG notices. Looks between MOONFLOWER  
and the ULTRASOUND. He shakes his head, puts it back in the  
wrong place. He exits, giving MOONFLOWER a wide berth.

A DART LODGES ITSELF FIRMLY IN THE WALL, LEFT OF DOUG'S HEAD.

EXT. CLUB HOUSE

MOONFLOWER paces outside CLUB HOUSE. Her king persona is  
gone. She watches as developers come to do inspections, sign  
paperwork, hire special police. Tear up the FLOWER BED.

MOONFLOWER (V.O.)  
It's Mother's Day, ladies. Our day.  
We not gonna let them take that  
celebration from us.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

MOONFLOWER and a three friends stand in a circle around eggs, toilet paper, and spray paint. Each selects weapon of choice.

MOONFLOWER

Think of this as the most important walk of our life. Category is fuck Douglass and all them land grabbing friends of his.

(pulling out a handshovel)  
I'll catch up with y'all.

EXT. CLUB HOUSE

MOONFLOWERS FRIENDS descend on the building. After a moment, lights turn on inside. FRIENDS laugh and retreat. SPECIAL POLICE OFFICER runs out the front door, chasing them around the block. His hand is on a GUN in his hip holster. Out of breath, OFFICER gives up.

CUT TO:

MOONFLOWER brings the FLOWER to the FLOWER BED, planting it gingerly in the turned soil. She sings the SONG as she works with the earth. Doesn't hear the OFFICER approach from behind, GUN raised.

SAFETY CLICKS. MOONFLOWER freezes, more angry at the threat than afraid. MOONFLOWER INHALES. EXHALES. Turns slowly, hands raised.

GUNSHOT. SHOVEL CLATTERS TO PAVEMENT. ANGLE ON FLOWER. SONG FADES IN.

OBITUARY READS "...FROM WHOM WE CONTINUE TO DRAW POWER AND INSPIRATION. MAY HOUSE OF BOTANNICA LIVE BEYOND HER AS IT LIVED WITH HER. BOLDLY, WITHOUT APOLOGY. AND WITH LOVE."

CUT BACK TO:

INT. CLUB HOUSE - YEAR 2099

ROSS sings the final notes of the SONG with her eyes closed. Tears roll down her face. She takes a shaky breath. The room is completely silent.

She opens her eyes and looks down, at blood spreading out across her lap. Dripping onto the stage. So much blood. Her breathing intensifies, as if she is about to scream.

CUT TO BLACK.