

Ugly Bunny

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. SIDEWALK - QUIET NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Walking briskly on her trip home from work is BELLA WINTHROP, 20s. She's dressed like a junior executive: trim navy business suit, hair pulled back, sunglasses, flawless skin.

There's one exception to Bella's corporate attire: a comfy pair of running shoes. No cumbersome high heels for her.

And those shoes suit Bella because she radiates athleticism. It's not hard to imagine her tossing on some running shorts at home and knocking out five or six post-work miles.

Bella isn't alone on the sidewalk. Down the block from her is LUPE SANCHEZ, 30s, who pushes her 1-year-old son EDDIE in a clattery stroller. One of the plastic wheels is off-kilter.

Eddie clutches a stuffed bunny named Carrot Face, and the sight of this adorable toy stops Bella dead in her tracks. Her lips part like a reptile that senses nearby prey.

Bella breaks into a trot. Five yards. Ten. Fifteen.

Now it's a sprint. Bella zooms to the stroller and swipes the bunny from little Eddie's hands. A clean pluck.

Eddie doesn't even realize that Carrot Face has been taken until Bella is a half block away.

The boy studies his empty hands and whimpers. A few seconds pass before he screams bloody murder.

Lupe jolts into action. Is Eddie hurt? Has he been stung by a bee? Where's Carrot Face? She realizes the bunny is gone.

Bella stops running and watches Lupe's desperate search. Dark amusement spreads over Bella's face. Grim, twisted delight.

It takes several moments for Lupe to notice Bella and Carrot Face. The mother calls hopefully to her:

LUPE

Oh, there it is. Thank God.

The relief on Lupe's face collapses as Bella dashes away with Carrot Face. A madwoman on the run.

And just like that, the chase is on.

Lupe shoves the stroller forward with all her might, and little Eddie gets whiplashed backwards, his tears streaming.

LUPE

Stop! Come back here!

The stroller wheels rumble on the sidewalk, causing Lupe's forearms vibrate. Her shoes scrape against the cement. Angry spittle collects on her lips.

The defective wheel spins sideways, nearly toppling the stroller. But Lupe corrects course and pushes forward. She gulps for air. Rage, vengeance, and adrenaline propel her.

But she can't keep up. Bella is way faster. A former track star, it seems. Her dark ponytail whips back and forth.

LUPE

Crazy bitch! Come back!

Eddie wails. He wants his bunny. But Lupe gasps and rolls the stroller to a stop.

LUPE

(screaming at Bella)

What's wrong with you?!

Exhausted and confused, Lupe watches Bella run until she is completely out of sight.

Little Eddie won't ever see Carrot Face again. He whimpers ineffectively.

His bunny now belongs to Bella.

INT. BELLA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Clad in a stained, greasy apron, Bella slices open Carrot Face with a knife and rips out all of his stuffing.

The bunny now resembles a limp gym sock that's been abandoned at the laundromat. His dull eyes stare into the dark void.

Bella reminisces about the theft with Carrot Face's carcass.

BELLA

You didn't like living with that family did you? Did you hear the awful things that stroller woman said to me?

Bella retrieves a bowl of gray, rancid sauerkraut from her counter and stuffs it into Carrot Face's sagging pelt.

The bunny's fur becomes wet from the cabbage juices. And Bella's fingers slicken, too.

BELLA
(to Carrot Face)
She said I was crazy. Well, she's
the crazy one, don't you think?

The goopy sauerkraut isn't an effective filler. Carrot Face sags: a freakish, lopsided mess. But Bella isn't done.

Into the bunny she stuffs cigarette butts, crushed eggshells, bacon grease, and a handful of thumb tax.

After a haphazard sewing job, the bunny is somewhat in form.

Whistling happily, Bella moves Carrot Face to his new home.

INT. BELLA'S BACK ROOM - NIGHT

The area is filled with shelves of stuffed animals that have been cut up and refilled like Carrot Face.

They all sag, filled with awful ingredients. Each one is basically a fuzzy Frankenstein's monster, rotting on the inside and sewn together randomly.

It's clear now that Bella has stolen dozens and dozens of stuffed animals from children to stock her shelves.

Hanging on the walls: strange drawings. Some of them look like ancient pagan symbols. Others are sketches of the deformed stuffed animals.

Bella gazes into the air above her. She speaks as if someone or something is in the room with her.

BELLA
I got you a good one today. Come
check him out.

She shifts Carrot Face's position on the shelf.

BELLA
He's the cutest one yet. So sweet.
And a lot of tears were shed over
him, which makes him even better.

She pushes her finger into the bunny's mushy fur.

BELLA
If you want to play with him, it's
all right. That's why I got him.

Bella quietly waits for a response that never comes.

BELLA

Maybe you need a little alone time.
I'll leave you be for a little
while.

She flips off the light, leaving the warped stuffed animals in darkness.

INT. BELLA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Several hours have passed. Bella sleeps in her bed among expensive sheets. A beauty facemask covers her features. It makes her resemble the Phantom of the Opera.

The lights are out, but a TV flickers at the other end of the room. Bella must have fallen asleep while watching.

Without warning the TV turns off on its own. An instant later, the sheets are whisked off Bella's body. But nobody is in the room with her.

Bella is startled out of her sleep. She reaches out in confusion.

BELLA

Hello?

Thud, thud, thud. This noise comes from elsewhere in Bella's apartment.

BELLA

You're here!

Filled with excitement, she rushes toward the noise.

INT. BACK ROOM DOORWAY - NIGHT

Bella puts her hand on the door. All varieties of thumping and crashing are happening inside the back room.

Someone or something is in there--full of aggression.

Eyes wild with anticipation, Bella opens the door and slips inside, closing it behind her.

The view stays upon the door, but Bella's voice is clear from the other side.

BELLA (O.S.)

You're finally here. Welcome.

Smash. Crash. Thud. All hell is breaking loose in that room.

Bella laughs at whatever is happening.

BELLA (O.S.)
I'm so happy to meet you. I've
prepared for so long.

But she soon cries out with pain.

BELLA (O.S.)
Hey! Stop it! That hurts!

Shrill childish laughter is accompanied by snapping wood.

Shrieks of pain from Bella. She rushes out of the room,
slamming the door behind her.

Blood drips from her nose and lips. Her beauty facemask is
partially ripped, so it looks like bloody flaps of skin hang
from her face.

The violence and blood don't deter Bella whatsoever.

BELLA
Keep playing with your toys. I'll
be right back.

INT. BELLA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

In the corner of the room sits a five-gallon glass jug filled
with briny, pickled fluid. A cork keeps the liquid in.

The jug is massively heavy and Bella strains to simply push
it out of the corner.

With great effort, she gets the bottle to the midpoint of the
room.

Time for a quick pitstop. Bella rushes to a drawer and
removes a meat cleaver. From a different drawer, she selects
a round peppermint candy.

Back to the jug she goes, pushing it with great effort.

INT. BACK ROOM DOORWAY - NIGHT

Sweating massively, breathing hard, bleeding from her face,
Bella has finally pushed the jug all the way here.

Crashing sounds still sound from the other side of the door,
accompanied by shrieks that seemingly come from a child.

Bella opens the door with the intent of pushing the five-gallon jug into the room, but there's a problem. A raised threshold prevents her from sliding the bottle any farther.

She will have to lift the massive bottle into the room.

Crouching, wrapping her arms around the jug, Bella inches it off the ground. Her spine pops from the great weight.

It takes every bit of strength to lift it slightly higher...

Floop. The jug slips from her grasp and smashes her foot.

Howling pain. Bella pounds the ground. Her toes are crushed.

As she screams, the entity inside her back room pelts her with bits of wood and shredded stuffed animal remains.

Bella shoves the jug off her toes, and it tips into the room.

INT. BELLA'S BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Fighting the pain, Bella scans the room. The shelves and stuffed animals have been torn to pieces.

BELLA

You're being a bad boy!

Childish laughter fills the room.

BELLA

You'll need some boundaries.

She struggles to her feet and pulls some of the pagan symbol drawings off of the wall. She arranges them around the jug.

As she does this, pieces of wood fly at her from the shattered shelves.

Bella begins to chant.

BELLA

Muno pate bellum...

She uncorks the jug and drops the peppermint inside. It slowly sinks to the bottom.

BELLA

Changelling, come forth.

Bella brings the meat cleaver close to her little finger.

She raises the blade and snaps it down, severing the finger from her hand. Crude surgery.

Fighting through pain, Bella drops her severed little finger into the jar. It drifts down in the liquid and comes to rest alongside of the peppermint. A trail of blood follows.

Bella chants indecipherable phrases, but they are drowned out by wild shrieks of the spirit that inhabits this room.

It's too much for Bella. She's woozy. Her eyes roll back and she faints.

The lights go out. The room fills with inhuman noises, but what's happening remains unseen.

INT. BELLA'S BACK ROOM - DAY

Sunlight emerges.

Bella regains her senses, blinking off sleep.

The room is a disaster, torn apart, but Bella focuses entirely on the jug. It takes her a moment to discern what's inside.

The jug is no longer empty. Wedged up against the glass is a chubby, waxy face, wide as a pumpkin. A pair of veiny eyes blink often from the sting of the brine.

It's the changeling, the wild child spirit that was tearing apart the room the night before.

The lips on this changeling are locked in a frown, furious for being trapped in this bottle.

The spirit creature's body is in the bottle too, but it is squished underneath the massive head.

Bella's beauty mask hangs in ugly flaps around her jowls. She cheers at the sight of the child spirit wedged into the jar.

BELLA

I got you! I got you!

She taps the glass.

BELLA

Do you know hard it is to catch one
of you?

She cackles.

BELLA
A changeling. That's what you are.
A child spirit.

Bella crawls closer.

BELLA
Nobody ever catches one of you! But
I've done it! Me! Me! Me!

The changeling in the jug sneers and blinks.

BELLA
You took the bait. You came for the
bunny, and then you jumped into the
jar to get the candy and my finger.
Just like I planned.

Bella draws close to the glass. An inch away.

BELLA
You're my new baby. I'm your mama.

Bella kisses the glass. The changeling in the jar belches up
an angry air bubble.

BELLA
We're going to have so much fun
together. You'll see.

The creature sneers at her.

Bella spots Carrot Face nearby and sets him by the jug.

BELLA
Oh, look. Your favorite stuffed
bunny. Isn't that cute?

Carrot Face sags alongside the glass while the changeling
glares from within.

And Bella just keeps repeating herself in absolute bliss.

BELLA
So cute. So cute. So cute. So cute.

She could go on like this forever.

FADE OUT: